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EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

VOL. IV

WORDSWORTH

SOUTHEY

LANDOR

WORDSWORTH

By F. W. H. MYERS

SOUTHEY

By EDWARD DOWDEN

LANDOR

By SIDNEY COLVIN, M.A.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

English Men of Letters

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WORDSWORTH

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BY

F. W. H. MYERS

"From worlds not quickened by the sun
A portion of the gift is won;
An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread
On ground which British shepherds tread."

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1906

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First Edition 1880. *Reprinted* 1881, 1885
New Issue 1888. *Reprinted* 1893, 1896, 1899, 1902, 1906

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WORDSWORTH.

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CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND EDUCATION—CAMBRIDGE.

I CANNOT, perhaps, more fitly begin this short biography than with some words in which its subject has expressed his own feelings as to the spirit in which such a task should be approached. "Silence," says Wordsworth, "is a privilege of the grave, a right of the departed: let him, therefore, who infringes that right by speaking publicly of, for, or against, those who cannot speak for themselves, take heed that he opens not his mouth without a sufficient sanction. Only to philosophy enlightened by the affections does it belong justly to estimate the claims of the deceased on the one hand, and of the present age and future generations on the other, and to strike a balance between them. Such philosophy runs a risk of becoming extinct among us, if the coarse intrusions into the recesses, the gross breaches upon the sanctities, of domestic life, to which we have lately been more and more accustomed, are to be regarded as indications of a vigorous state of public feeling. The wise and good respect, as one of the noblest characteristics of Englishmen, that jealousy of familiar approach

which, while it contributes to the maintenance of private dignity, is one of the most efficacious guardians of rational public freedom."

In accordance with these views the poet entrusted to his nephew, the late Bishop of Lincoln, the task of composing memoirs of his life, in the just confidence that nothing would by such hands be given to the world which was inconsistent with the dignity either of the living or of the dead. From those memoirs the facts contained in the present work have been for the most part drawn. It has, however, been my fortune, through hereditary friendships, to have access to many manuscript letters and much oral tradition bearing upon the poet's private life;[1] and some details and some passages of letters hitherto unpublished, will appear in these pages. It would seem, however, that there is but little of public interest in Wordsworth's life which has not already been given to the world, and I have shrunk from narrating such minor personal incidents as he would himself have thought it needless to dwell upon. I have endeavoured, in short, to write as though the Subject of this biography were himself its Auditor, listening, indeed, from some region where all of truth is discerned and nothing but truth desired, but checking by his venerable presence any such revelation as public advantage does not call for, and private delicacy would condemn.

As regards the critical remarks which these pages contain, I have only to say that I have carefully consulted such notices of the poet as his personal friends have left

[1] I take this opportunity of thanking Mr. William Wordsworth, the son (now deceased), and Mr. William Wordsworth, the grandson, of the poet, for help most valuable in enabling me to give a true impression of the poet's personality.

us, and also, I believe, nearly every criticism of importance which has appeared on his works. I find with pleasure that a considerable agreement of opinion exists,—though less among professed poets or critics, than among men of eminence in other departments of thought or action whose attention has been directed to Wordsworth's poems. And although I have felt it right to express in each case my own views with exactness, I have been able to feel that I am not obtruding on the reader any merely fanciful estimate in which better accredited judges would refuse to concur.

Without further preface I now begin my story of Wordsworth's life, in words which he himself dictated to his intended biographer. "I was born," he said, "at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on April 7th, 1770, the second son of John Wordsworth, attorney-at-law—as lawyers of this class were then called—and law-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. My mother was Anne, only daughter of William Cookson, mercer, of Penrith, and of Dorothy, born Crackanthorp, of the ancient family of that name, who from the times of Edward the Third had lived in Newbiggen Hall, Westmoreland. My grandfather was the first of the name of Wordsworth who came into Westmoreland, where he purchased the small estate of Sockbridge. He was descended from a family who had been settled at Peniston, in Yorkshire, near the sources of the Don, probably before the Norman Conquest. Their names appear on different occasions in all the transactions, personal and public, connected with that parish; and I possess, through the kindness of Colonel Beaumont, an almery, made in 1525, at the expense of a William Wordsworth, as is expressed in a Latin inscription carved upon it, which carries the

pedigree of the family back four generations from himself. The time of my infancy and early boyhood was passed partly at Cockermouth, and partly with my mother's parents at Penrith, where my mother, in the year 1778, died of a decline, brought on by a cold, in consequence of being put, at a friend's house in London, in what used to be called 'a best bedroom.' My father never recovered his usual cheerfulness of mind after this loss, and died when I was in my fourteenth year, a schoolboy, just returned from Hawkshead, whither I had been sent with my elder brother Richard, in my ninth year.

"I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast, when I was going to say the catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter. An intimate friend of hers told me that she once said to her, that the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious was William; and he, she said, would be remarkable, either for good or for evil. The cause of this was, that I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper; so much so that I remember going once into the attics of my grandfather's house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with an intention of destroying myself with one of the foils, which I knew was kept there. I took the foil in hand, but my heart failed. Upon another occasion, while I was at my grandfather's house at Penrith, along with my eldest brother, Richard, we were whipping tops together in the large drawing-room, on which the carpet was only laid down upon particular occasions. The walls were hung round with family pictures, and I said to my brother, 'Dare you strike your whip through that old lady's petticoat?' He replied, 'No, I won't.' 'Then, said I, 'here goes!' and I struck my lash through her

hooped petticoat; for which, no doubt, though I have forgotten it, I was properly punished. But, possibly from some want of judgment in punishments inflicted, I had become perverse and obstinate in defying chastisement, and rather proud of it than otherwise.

"Of my earliest days at school I have little to say, but that they were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty then, and in the vacations, to read whatever books I liked. For example, I read all Fielding's works, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, and any part of Swift that I liked—*Gulliver's Travels*, and the *Tale of the Tub*, being both much to my taste. It may be, perhaps, as well to mention, that the first verses which I wrote were a task imposed by my master; the subject, *The Summer Vacation;* and of my own accord I added others upon *Return to School.* There was nothing remarkable in either poem; but I was called upon, among other scholars, to write verses upon the completion of the second centenary from the foundation of the school in 1585 by Archbishop Sandys. These verses were much admired—far more than they deserved, for they were but a tame imitation of Pope's versification, and a little in his style."

But it was not from exercises of this kind that Wordsworth's school-days drew their inspiration. No years of his life, perhaps, were richer in strong impressions; but they were impressions derived neither from books nor from companions, but from the majesty and loveliness of the scenes around him;—from Nature, his life-long mistress, loved with the first heats of youth. To her influence we shall again recur; it will be most convenient first to trace Wordsworth's progress through the curriculum of ordinary education.

It was due to the liberality of Wordsworth's two

uncles, Richard Wordsworth and Christopher Crackanthorp (under whose care he and his brothers were placed at their father's death, in 1783), that his education was prolonged beyond his school-days. For Sir James Lowther, afterwards Lord Lonsdale,—whose agent Wordsworth's father, Mr. John Wordsworth, was—becoming aware that his agent had about 5000*l.* at the bank, and wishing, partly on political grounds, to make his power over him absolute, had forcibly borrowed this sum of him, and then refused to repay it. After Mr. John Wordsworth's death much of the remaining fortune which he left behind him was wasted in efforts to compel Lord Lonsdale to refund this sum; but it was never recovered till his death in 1801, when his successor repaid 8500*l.* to the Wordsworths, being a full acquittal, with interest, of the original debt. The fortunes of the Wordsworth family were, therefore, at a low ebb in 1787, and much credit is due to the uncles who discerned the talents of William and Christopher, and bestowed a Cambridge education on the future Poet Laureate, and the future Master of Trinity.

In October, 1787, then, Wordsworth went up as an undergraduate to St. John's College, Cambridge. The first court of this College, in the south-western corner of which were Wordsworth's rooms, is divided only by a narrow lane from the Chapel of Trinity College, and his first memories are of the Trinity clock, telling the hours "twice over, with a male and female voice," of the pealing organ, and of the prospect when

> From my pillow looking forth, by light
> Of moon or favouring stars I could behold
> The antechapel, where the statue stood
> Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

For the most part the recollections which Wordsworth brought away from Cambridge are such as had already found expression more than once in English literature; for it has been the fortune of that ancient University to receive in her bosom most of that long line of poets who form the peculiar glory of our English speech. Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Marlowe; Dryden, Cowley, and Waller; Milton, George Herbert, and Gray—to mention only the most familiar names—had owed allegiance to that mother who received Wordsworth now, and Coleridge and Byron immediately after him. "Not obvious, not obtrusive, she;" but yet her sober dignity has often seemed no unworthy setting for minds, like Wordsworth's, meditative without languor, and energies advancing without shock or storm. Never, perhaps, has the spirit of Cambridge been more truly caught than in Milton's *Penseroso;* for this poem obviously reflects the seat of learning which the poet had lately left, just as the *Allegro* depicts the cheerful rusticity of the Buckinghamshire village which was his new home. And thus the *Penseroso* was understood by Gray, who, in his *Installation Ode*, introduces Milton among the bards and sages who lean from heaven,

> To bless the place where, on their opening soul,
> First the genuine ardour stole.

"'Twas Milton struck the deep-toned shell," and invoked with the old affection the scenes which witnessed his best and early years:

> Ye brown o'er-arching groves,
> That contemplation loves,
> Where willowy Camus lingers with delight!
> Oft at the blush of dawn

> I trod your level lawn,
> Oft wooed the gleam of Cynthia silver-bright
> In cloisters dim, far from the haunts of Folly,
> With Freedom by my side, and soft-eyed Melancholy.

And Wordsworth also "on the dry smooth-shaven green" paced on solitary evenings "to the far-off curfew's sound," beneath those groves of forest-trees among which "Philomel still deigns a song" and the spirit of contemplation lingers still; whether the silent avenues stand in the summer twilight filled with fragrance of the lime, or the long rows of chestnut engirdle the autumn river-lawns with walls of golden glow, or the tall elms cluster in garden or *Wilderness* into towering citadels of green. Beneath one exquisite ash-tree, wreathed with ivy, and hung in autumn with yellow tassels from every spray, Wordsworth used to linger long. "Scarcely Spenser's self," he tells us,

> Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,
> Or could more bright appearances create
> Of human forms with superhuman powers,
> Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights
> Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

And there was another element in Wordsworth's life at Cambridge more peculiarly his own—that exultation which a boy born among the mountains may feel when he perceives that the delight in the external world which the mountains have taught him has not perished by uprooting, nor waned for want of nourishment in field or fen; that even here, where nature is unadorned, and scenery, as it were, reduced to its elements,—where the prospect is but the plain surface of the earth, stretched wide beneath an open heaven,—even here he can still feel the early glow,

can take delight in that broad and tranquil greenness, and in the august procession of the day.

> As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,
> I looked for universal things; perused
> The common countenance of earth and sky—
> Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace
> Of that first Paradise whence man was driven;
> And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed
> By the proud name she bears—the name of Heaven.

Nor is it only in these open-air scenes that Wordsworth has added to the long tradition a memory of his own. The "storied windows richly dight," which have passed into a proverb in Milton's song, cast in King's College Chapel the same "soft chequerings" upon their framework of stone while Wordsworth watched through the pauses of the anthem the winter afternoon's departing glow:

> Martyr, or King, or sainted Eremite,
> Whoe'er ye be that thus, yourselves unseen,
> Imbue your prison-bars with solemn sheen,
> Shine on, until ye fade with coming Night.

From those shadowy seats whence Milton had heard "the pealing organ blow to the full-voiced choir below," Wordsworth too gazed upon—

> That branching roof
> Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells
> Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
> Lingering, and wandering on as loth to die—
> Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
> That they were born for immortality.

Thus much, and more, there was of ennobling and unchangeable in the very aspect and structure of that ancient University, by which Wordsworth's mind was bent towards

a kindred greatness. But of active moral and intellectual life there was at that time little to be found within her walls. The floodtide of her new life had not yet set in; she was still slumbering, as she had slumbered long, content to add to her majesty by the mere lapse of generations, and increment of her ancestral calm. Even had the intellectual life of the place been more stirring, it is doubtful how far Wordsworth would have been welcomed, or deserved to be welcomed, by authorities or students. He began residence at seventeen, and his northern nature was late to flower. There seems, in fact, to have been even less of visible promise about him than we should have expected; but rather something untamed and insubordinate, something heady and self-confident; an independence that seemed only rusticity, and an indolent ignorance which assumed too readily the tones of scorn. He was as yet a creature of the lakes and mountains, and love for Nature was only slowly leading him to love and reverence for man. Nay, such attraction as he had hitherto felt for the human race had been interwoven with her influence in a way so strange that to many minds it will seem a childish fancy not worth recounting. The objects of his boyish idealization had been Cumbrian shepherds—a race whose personality seems to melt into Nature's—who are united as intimately with moor and mountain as the petrel with the sea.

> A rambling schoolboy, thus
> I felt his presence in his own domain
> As of a lord and master—or a power,
> Or genius, under Nature, under God,
> Presiding; and severest solitude
> Had more commanding looks when he was there.
> When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
> Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills

By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun;
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height! like an aërial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before my sight;
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.

"This sanctity of Nature given to man,"—this interfusion of human interest with the sublimity of moor and hill,—formed a typical introduction to the manner in which Wordsworth regarded mankind to the end,—depicting him as set, as it were, amid impersonal influences, which make his passion and struggle but a little thing; as when painters give but a strip of their canvas to the fields and cities of men, and overhang the narrowed landscape with the space and serenity of heaven.

To this distant perception of man—of man "purified, removed, and to a distance that was fit"—was added, in his first summer vacation, a somewhat closer interest in the small joys and sorrows of the villagers of Hawkshead,—a new sympathy for the old Dame in whose house the poet still lodged, for "the quiet woodman in the woods," and even for the "frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland," with whom he now delighted to spend an occasional evening in dancing and country mirth. And since the

events in this poet's life are for the most part inward and unseen, and depend upon some shock and coincidence between the operations of his spirit and the cosmorama of the external world, he has recorded with especial emphasis a certain sunrise which met him as he walked homewards from one of these scenes of rustic gaiety,—a sunrise which may be said to have begun that poetic career which a sunset was to close:

> Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
> My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit.

His second long vacation brought him a further gain in human affections. His sister, of whom he had seen little for some years, was with him once more at Penrith, and with her another maiden,

> By her exulting outside look of youth
> And placid under-countenance, first endeared;

whose presence now laid the foundation of a love which was to be renewed and perfected when his need for it was full, and was to be his support and solace to his life's end. His third long vacation he spent in a walking tour in Switzerland. Of this, now the commonest relaxation of studious youth, he speaks as of an "unprecedented course," indicating "a hardy slight of college studies and their set rewards." And it seems, indeed, probable that Wordsworth and his friend Jones were actually the first undergraduates who ever spent their summer in this way. The pages of the *Prelude* which narrate this excursion, and especially the description of the crossing of the Simplon,—

The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,—

form one of the most impressive parts of that singular autobiographical poem, which, at first sight so tedious and insipid, seems to gather force and meaning with each fresh perusal. These pages, which carry up to the verge of manhood the story of Wordsworth's career, contain, perhaps, as strong and simple a picture as we shall anywhere find of hardy English youth,—its proud self-sufficingness and careless independence of all human things. Excitement, and thought, and joy, seem to come at once at its bidding; and the chequered and struggling existence of adult men seems something which it need never enter, and hardly deigns to comprehend.

Wordsworth and his friend encountered on this tour many a stirring symbol of the expectancy that was running through the nations of Europe. They landed at Calais "on the very eve of that great federal day" when the Trees of Liberty were planted all over France. They met on their return

The Brabant armies on the fret
For battle in the cause of liberty.

But the exulting pulse that ran through the poet's veins could hardly yet pause to sympathize deeply even with what in the world's life appealed most directly to ardent youth.

A stripling, scarcely of the household then
Of social life, I looked upon these things
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt—
Was touched, but with no intimate concern.
I seemed to move along them as a bird
Moves through the air—or as a fish pursues
Its sport, or feeds in its proper element.

I wanted not that joy, I did not need
Such help. The ever-living universe,
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories;
And the independent spirit of pure youth
Called forth at every season new delights,
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields.

CHAPTER II.

RESIDENCE IN LONDON AND IN FRANCE.

WORDSWORTH took his B.A. degree in January, 1791, and quitted Cambridge with no fixed intentions as to his future career. "He did not feel himself," he said long afterwards, "good enough for the Church; he felt that his mind was not properly disciplined for that holy office, and that the struggle between his conscience and his impulses would have made life a torture. He also shrank from the law. He had studied military history with great interest, and the strategy of war; and he always fancied that he had talents for command; and he at one time thought of a military life; but then he was without connexions, and he felt if he were ordered to the West Indies his talents would not save him from the yellow fever, and he gave that up." He therefore repaired to London, and lived there for a time on a small allowance and with no definite aim. His relations with the great city were of a very slight and external kind. He had few acquaintances, and spent his time mainly in rambling about the streets. His descriptions of this phase of his life have little interest. There is some flatness in an enumeration of the nationalities observable in a London crowd, concluding thus:—

> Malays, Lascars, the Tartar, the Chinese,
> And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.

But Wordsworth's limitations were inseparably connected with his strength. And just as the flat scenery of Cambridgeshire had only served to intensify his love for such elements of beauty and grandeur as still were present in sky and fen, even so the bewilderment of London taught him to recognize with an intenser joy such fragments of things rustic, such aspects of things eternal, as were to be found amidst that rush and roar. To the frailer spirit of Hartley Coleridge the weight of London might seem a load impossible to shake off. "And what hath Nature," he plaintively asked,—

> And what hath Nature but the blank void sky
> And the thronged river toiling to the main?

But Wordsworth saw more than this. He became, as one may say, the poet not of London considered as London, but of London considered as a part of the country. Like his own *Farmer of Tilsbury Vale*—

> In the throng of the Town like a Stranger is he,
> Like one whose own Country's far over the sea;
> And Nature, while through the great city he hies,
> Full ten times a day takes his heart by surprise.

Among the poems describing these sudden shocks of vision and memory none is more exquisite than the *Reverie of Poor Susan:*

> At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
> Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
> Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
> In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.
>
> 'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
> A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
> Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
> And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

The picture is one of those which come home to many a country heart with one of those sudden "revulsions into the natural" which philosophers assert to be the essence of human joy. But noblest and best known of all these poems is the *Sonnet on Westminster Bridge*, "Earth hath not anything to show more fair;" in which nature has reasserted her dominion over the works of all the multitude of men; and in the early clearness the poet beholds the great City—as Sterling imagined it on his dying-bed—"not as full of noise and dust and confusion, but as something silent, grand and everlasting." And even in later life, when Wordsworth was often in London, and was welcome in any society, he never lost this external manner of regarding it. He was always of the same mind as the group of listeners in his *Power of Music*:

> Now, Coaches and Chariots! roar on like a stream!
> Here are twenty Souls happy as souls in a dream:
> They are deaf to your murmurs, they care not for you,
> Nor what ye are flying, nor what ye pursue!

He never made the attempt,—vulgarized by so many a "fashionable novelist," and in which no poet has succeeded yet,—to disentangle from that turmoil its elements of romance and of greatness; to enter that realm of emotion where Nature's aspects become the scarcely noted accessory of vicissitudes that transcend her own; to trace the passion or the anguish which whirl along some lurid vista toward a sun that sets in storm, or gaze across silent squares by summer moonlight amid a smell of dust and flowers.

But although Wordsworth passed thus through London unmodified and indifferent, the current of things was sweeping him on to mingle in a fiercer tumult,—to be

caught in the tides of a more violent and feverish life. In November 1791 he landed in France, meaning to pass the winter at Orleans and learn French. Up to this date the French Revolution had impressed him in a rather unusual manner,—namely, as being a matter of course. The explanation of this view is a somewhat singular one. Wordsworth's was an old family, and his connexions were some of them wealthy and well placed in the world; but the chances of his education had been such that he could scarcely realize to himself any other than a democratic type of society. Scarcely once, he tells us, in his school days had he seen boy or man who claimed respect on the score of wealth and blood; and the manly atmosphere of Cambridge preserved even in her lowest days a society

> Where all stood thus far
> Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
> In honour, as in one community,
> Scholars and gentlemen;

while the teachings of nature and the dignity of Cumbrian peasant life had confirmed his high opinion of the essential worth of man. The upheaval of the French people, therefore, and the downfall of privilege, seemed to him no portent for good or evil, but rather the tardy return of a society to its stable equilibrium. He passed through revolutionized Paris with satisfaction and sympathy, but with little active emotion, and proceeded first to Orleans, and then to Blois, between which places he spent nearly a year. At Orleans he became intimately acquainted with the nobly-born but republican general Beaupuis, an inspiring example of all in the Revolution that was self-devoted and chivalrous and had compassion on the wretched poor. In conversation with him Words-

worth learnt with what new force the well-worn adages of the moralist fall from the lips of one who is called upon to put them at once in action, and to stake life itself on the verity of his maxims of honour. The poet's heart burned within him as he listened. He could not indeed help mourning sometimes at the sight of a dismantled chapel, or peopling in imagination the forest-glades in which they sat with the chivalry of a bygone day. But he became increasingly absorbed in his friend's ardour, and the Revolution—*mulier formosa superne*—seemed to him big with all the hopes of man.

He returned to Paris in October 1792,—a month after the massacres of September; and he has described his agitation and dismay at the sight of such world-wide destinies swayed by the hands of such men. In a passage which curiously illustrates that reasoned self-confidence and deliberate boldness which for the most part he showed only in the peaceful incidents of a literary career, he has told us how he was on the point of putting himself forward as a leader of the Girondist party, in the conviction that his singleheartedness of aim would make him, in spite of foreign birth and imperfect speech, a point round which the confused instincts of the multitude might not impossibly rally.

Such a course of action,—which, whatever its other results, would undoubtedly have conducted him to the guillotine with his political friends in May 1793,—was rendered impossible by a somewhat undignified hindrance. Wordsworth, while in his own eyes "a patriot of the world," was in the eyes of others a young man of twenty-two, travelling on a small allowance, and running his head into unnecessary dangers. His funds were stopped, and he reluctantly returned to England at the close of 1792.

And now to Wordsworth, as to many other English patriots, there came, on a great scale, that form of sorrow which in private life is one of the most agonizing of all—when two beloved beings, each of them erring greatly, become involved in bitter hate. The new-born Republic flung down to Europe as her battle-gage the head of a king. England, in an hour of horror that was almost panic, accepted the defiance, and war was declared between the two countries early in 1793. "No shock," says Wordsworth,

> Given to my moral nature had I known
> Down to that very moment; neither lapse
> Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
> A revolution, save at this one time;

and the sound of the evening gun-fire at Portsmouth seemed at once the embodiment and the premonition of England's guilt and woe.

Yet his distracted spirit could find no comfort in the thought of France. For in France the worst came to the worst; and everything vanished of liberty except the crimes committed in her name.

> Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
> Were my day-thoughts, my nights were miserable.
> Through months, through years, long after the last beat
> Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep
> To me came rarely charged with natural gifts—
> Such ghastly visions had I of despair,
> And tyranny, and implements of death; . . .
> And levity in dungeons, where the dust
> Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
> Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
> In long orations, which I strove to plead
> Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice
> Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
> Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
> In the last place of refuge—my own soul.

These years of perplexity and disappointment, following on a season of overstrained and violent hopes, were the sharpest trial through which Wordsworth ever passed. The course of affairs in France, indeed, was such as seemed by an irony of fate to drive the noblest and firmest hearts into the worst aberrations. For first of all in that Revolution, Reason had appeared as it were in visible shape, and hand in hand with Pity and Virtue; then, as the welfare of the oppressed peasantry began to be lost sight of amid the brawls of the factions of Paris, all that was attractive and enthusiastic in the great movement seemed to disappear, but yet Reason might still be thought to find a closer realization here than among scenes more serene and fair; and, lastly, Reason set in blood and tyranny and there was no more hope from France. But those who, like Wordsworth, had been taught by that great convulsion to disdain the fetters of sentiment and tradition and to look on Reason as supreme were not willing to relinquish their belief because violence had conquered her in one more battle. Rather they clung with the greater tenacity,—"adhered," in Wordsworth's words,

> More firmly to old tenets, and to prove
> Their temper, strained them more;

cast off more decisively than ever the influences of tradition, and in their Utopian visions even wished to see the perfected race severed in its perfection from the memories of humanity, and from kinship with the struggling past.

Through a mood of this kind Wordsworth had to travel now. And his nature, formed for pervading attachments and steady memories, suffered grievously from the priva-

tion of much which even the coldest and calmest temper cannot forego without detriment and pain. For it is not with impunity that men commit themselves to the sole guidance of either of the two great elements of their being. The penalties of trusting to the emotions alone are notorious; and every day affords some instance of a character that has degenerated into a bundle of impulses, of a will that has become caprice. But the consequences of making Reason our tyrant instead of our king are almost equally disastrous. There is so little which Reason, divested of all emotional or instinctive supports, is able to prove to our satisfaction that a sceptical aridity is likely to take possession of the soul. It was thus with Wordsworth; he was driven to a perpetual questioning of all beliefs and analysis of all motives,—

> Till, demanding formal proof,
> And seeking it in everything, I lost
> All feeling of conviction; and, in fine,
> Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
> Yielded up moral questions in despair.

In this mood all those great generalized conceptions which are the food of our love, our reverence, our religion, dissolve away; and Wordsworth tells us that at this time

> Even the visible universe
> Fell under the dominion of a taste
> Less spiritual, with microscopic view
> Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world.

He looked on the operations of nature "in disconnection dull and spiritless;" he could no longer apprehend her unity nor feel her charm. He retained indeed his craving for natural beauty, but in an uneasy and fastidious mood,—

> Giving way
> To a comparison of scene with scene,
> Bent overmuch on superficial things,
> Pampering myself with meagre novelties
> Of colour and proportion; to the moods
> Of time and season, to the moral power,
> The affections, and the spirit of the place,
> Insensible.

Such cold fits are common to all religions: they haunt the artist, the philanthropist, the philosopher, the saint. Often they are due to some strain of egoism or ambition which has intermixed itself with the impersonal desire; sometimes, as in Wordsworth's case, to the persistent tension of a mind which has been bent too ardently towards an ideal scarce possible to man. And in this case, when the objects of a man's habitual admiration are true and noble, they will ever be found to suggest some antidote to the fatigues of their pursuit. We shall see as we proceed how a deepening insight into the lives of the peasantry around him,—the happiness and virtue of simple Cumbrian homes,—restored to the poet a serener confidence in human nature, amid all the shame and downfall of such hopes in France. And that still profounder loss of delight in Nature herself,—that viewing of all things "in disconnection dull and spiritless," which, as it has been well said, is the truest definition of Atheism, inasmuch as a unity in the universe is the first element in our conception of God,—this dark pathway also was not without its outlet into the day. For the God in Nature is not only a God of Beauty, but a God of Law; his unity can be apprehended in power as well as in glory; and Wordsworth's mind, "sinking inward upon itself from thought to thought," found rest for the time in that austere religion,—Hebrew at once and scientific, common to a Newton and a

Job,—which is fostered by the prolonged contemplation of the mere Order of the sum of things.

> Not in vain
> I had been taught to reverence a Power
> That is the visible quality and shape
> And image of right reason.

Not, indeed, in vain! For he felt now that there is no side of truth, however remote from human interests, no aspect of the universe, however awful and impersonal, which may not have power at some season to guide and support the spirit of man. When Goodness is obscured, when Beauty wearies, there are some souls which still can cling and grapple to the conception of eternal Law.

Of such stern consolations the poet speaks as having restored him in his hour of need. But he gratefully acknowledges also another solace of a gentler kind. It was about this time (1795) that Wordsworth was blessed with the permanent companionship of his sister, to whom he was tenderly attached, but whom, since childhood, he had seen only at long intervals. Miss Wordsworth, after her father's death, had lived mainly with her maternal grandfather, Mr. Cookson, at Penrith, occasionally at Halifax with other relations, or at Forncett with her uncle Dr. Cookson, Canon of Windsor. She was now able to join her favourite brother; and in this gifted woman Wordsworth found a gentler and sunnier likeness of himself; he found a love which never wearied, and a sympathy fervid without blindness, whose suggestions lay so directly in his mind's natural course that they seemed to spring from the same individuality, and to form at once a portion of his inmost being. The opening of this new era of domestic happiness demands a separate chapter.

CHAPTER III.

MISS WORDSWORTH—LYRICAL BALLADS—SETTLEMENT AT GRASMERE.

FROM among many letters of Miss Wordsworth's to a beloved friend, (Miss Jane Pollard, afterwards Mrs. Marshall, of Hallsteads), which have been kindly placed at my disposal, I may without impropriety quote a few passages which illustrate the character and the affection of brother and sister alike. And first, in a letter (Forncett, February 1792), comparing her brothers Christopher and William, she says: "Christopher is steady and sincere in his attachments. William has both these virtues in an eminent degree, and a sort of violence of affection, if I may so term it, which demonstrates itself every moment of the day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men." And again (Forncett, June 1793), she writes to the same friend: "I have strolled into a neighbouring meadow, where I am enjoying the melody of birds, and the busy sounds of a fine summer's evening. But oh! how imperfect is my pleasure whilst I am alone! Why are you not seated with me? and my dear William,

why is he not here also? I could almost fancy that I see you both near me. I hear *you* point out a spot, where if we could erect a little cottage and call it our own we should be the happiest of human beings. I see my brother fired with the idea of leading his sister to such a retreat. Our parlour is in a moment furnished, our garden is adorned by magic; the roses and honeysuckles spring at our command; the wood behind the house lifts its head, and furnishes us with a winter's shelter and a summer's noonday shade. My dear friend, I trust that ere long you will be, without the aid of imagination, the companion of my walks, and my dear William may be of our party. . . . He is now going upon a tour in the west of England, with a gentleman who was formerly a schoolfellow, —a man of fortune, who is to bear all the expenses of the journey, and only requests the favour of William's company. He is perfectly at liberty to quit this companion as soon as anything more advantageous offers. But it is enough to say that I am likely to have the happiness of introducing you to my beloved brother. You must forgive me for talking so much of him; my affection hurries me on, and makes me forget that you cannot be so much interested in the subject as I am. You do not know him; you do not know how amiable he is. Perhaps you reply, 'But I know how blinded you are.' Well, my dearest, I plead guilty at once; I *must* be blind; he cannot be so pleasing as my fondness makes him. I am willing to allow that half the virtues with which I fancy him endowed are the creation of my love; but surely I may be excused! He was never tired of comforting his sister; he never left her in anger; he always met her with joy; he preferred her society to every other pleasure;—or rather, when we were so happy as to be within each other's reach,

he had no pleasure when we were compelled to be divided. Do not then expect too much from this brother of whom I have delighted so to talk to you. In the first place, you must be with him more than once before he will be perfectly easy in conversation. In the second place, his person is not in his favour—at least I should think not; but I soon ceased to discover this—nay, I almost thought that the opinion which I had formed was erroneous. He is, however, certainly rather plain; though otherwise has an extremely thoughtful countenance, but when he speaks it is often lighted up by a smile which I think very pleasing. But enough, he is my brother; why should I describe him? I shall be launching again into panegyric."

The brother's language to his sister is equally affectionate. "How much do I wish," he writes in 1793, "that each emotion of pleasure or pain that visits your heart should excite a similar pleasure or a similar pain within me, by that sympathy which will almost identify us when we have stolen to our little cottage. . . . I will write to my uncle, and tell him that I cannot think of going anywhere before I have been with you. Whatever answer he gives me, I certainly will make a point of once more mingling my transports with yours. Alas! my dear sister, how soon must this happiness expire; yet there are moments worth ages."

And again: in the same year he writes, "Oh, my dear, dear sister! with what transport shall I again meet you! with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight! . . . I see you in a moment running, or rather flying, to my arms."

Wordsworth was in all things fortunate, but in nothing more fortunate than in this, that so unique a companion

should have been ready to devote herself to him with an affection wholly free from egotism or jealousy,—an affection that yearned only to satisfy his subtlest needs, and to transfuse all that was best in herself into his larger being. And indeed that fortunate admixture or influence, whencesoever derived, which raised the race of Wordsworth to poetic fame, was almost more dominant and conspicuous in Dorothy Wordsworth than in the poet himself. "The shooting lights of her wild eyes" reflected to the full the strain of imaginative emotion which was mingled in the poet's nature with that spirit of steadfast and conservative virtue which has already given to the family a Master of Trinity, two Bishops, and other divines and scholars of weight and consideration. In the poet himself the conservative and ecclesiastical tendencies of his character became more and more apparent as advancing years stiffened the movements of the mind. In his sister the ardent element was less restrained; it showed itself in a most innocent direction, but it brought with it a heavy punishment. Her passion for nature and her affection for her brother led her into mountain rambles which were beyond her strength, and her last years were spent in a condition of physical and mental decay.

But at the time of which we are now speaking there was, perhaps, no one in the world who could have been to the poet such a companion as his sister became. She had not, of course, his grasp of mind or his poetic power; but her sensitiveness to nature was quite as keen as his, and her disposition resembled his "with sunshine added to daylight."

> Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
> Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
> Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,

> That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
> And everything she looked on, should have had
> An intimation how she bore herself
> Towards them, and to all creatures.

Her journal of a tour in Scotland, and her description of a week on Ullswater, affixed to Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes*,—diaries not written for publication but merely to communicate her own delight to intimate friends at a distance,—are surely indescribably attractive in their naive and tender feeling, combined with a delicacy of insight into natural beauty which was almost a new thing in the history of the world. If we compare, for instance, any of her descriptions of the Lakes with Southey's, we see the difference between mere literary skill, which can now be rivalled in many quarters, and that sympathetic intuition which comes of love alone. Even if we compare her with Gray, whose short notice of Cumberland bears on every page the stamp of a true poet, we are struck by the way in which Miss Wordsworth's tenderness for all living things gives character and pathos to her landscapes, and evokes from the wildest solitude some note that thrills the heart.

> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy.

The cottage life in her brother's company which we have seen Miss Wordsworth picturing to herself with girlish ardour, was destined to be realized no long time afterwards, thanks to the unlooked-for outcome of another friendship. If the poet's sister was his first admirer, Raisley Calvert may fairly claim the second place. Calvert was the son of the steward of the Duke of Norfolk, who possessed

large estates in Cumberland. He attached himself to Wordsworth, and in 1793 and 1794 the friends were much together. Calvert was then attacked by consumption, and Wordsworth nursed him with patient care. It was found at his death that he had left his friend a legacy of 900*l.* "The act," says Wordsworth, "was done entirely from a confidence on his part that I had powers and attainments which might be of use to mankind. Upon the interest of the 900*l.*—400*l.* being laid out in annuity—with 200*l.* deducted from the principal, and 100*l.* a legacy to my sister, and 100*l.* more which the *Lyrical Ballads* have brought me, my sister and I contrived to live seven years, nearly eight."

Trusting in this small capital, and with nothing to look to in the future except the uncertain prospect of the payment of Lord Lonsdale's debt to the family, Wordsworth settled with his sister at Racedown, near Crewkerne, in Dorsetshire, in the autumn of 1795, the choice of this locality being apparently determined by the offer of a cottage on easy terms. Here, in the first home which he had possessed, Wordsworth's steady devotion to poetry began. He had already, in 1792,[1] published two little poems, the *Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, which Miss Wordsworth (to whom the *Evening Walk* was addressed) criticises with candour in a letter to the same friend (Forncett, February 1792):—

"The scenes which he describes have been viewed with a poet's eye, and are portrayed with a poet's pencil; and the poems contain many passages exquisitely beautiful; but they also contain many faults, the chief of which are obscurity and a too frequent use of some particular expres-

[1] The *Memoirs* say in 1793, but the following MS. letter of 1792 speaks of them as already published.

sions and uncommon words; for instance, *moveless*, which he applies in a sense, if not new, at least different from its ordinary one. By 'moveless,' when applied to the swan, he means that sort of motion which is smooth without agitation; it is a very beautiful epithet, but ought to have been cautiously used. The word *viewless* also is introduced far too often. I regret exceedingly that he did not submit the works to the inspection of some friend before their publication, and he also joins with me in this regret."

These poems show a careful and minute observation of nature, but their versification—still reminding us of the imitators of Pope—has little originality or charm. They attracted the admiration of Coleridge, but had no further success.

At Racedown Wordsworth finished *Guilt and Sorrow*, a poem gloomy in tone and written mainly in his period of depression and unrest,—and wrote a tragedy called *The Borderers*, of which only a few lines show any promise of future excellence. He then wrote *The Ruined Cottage*, now incorporated in the First Book of the *Excursion*. This poem, on a subject thoroughly suited to his powers, was his first work of merit; and Coleridge, who visited the quiet household in June 1797, pronounces this poem "superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which in any way resembles it." In July 1797 the Wordsworths removed to Alfoxden, a large house in Somersetshire, near Netherstowey, where Coleridge was at that time living. Here Wordsworth added to his income by taking as pupil a young boy, the hero of the trifling poem *Anecdote for Fathers*, a son of Mr. Basil Montagu; and here he composed many of his smaller pieces. He has described the origin of the

Ancient Mariner and the *Lyrical Ballads* in a well-known passage, part of which I must here repeat :—

"In the autumn of 1797, Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton, and the Valley of Stones near to it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine*. In the course of this walk was planned the poem of the *Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which was to bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, a day or two before, that, while doubling Cape Horn they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime. The incident was thought fit for the purpose, and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead man, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. We began the composition together, on that to me memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular—

> And listened like a three years' child;
> The Mariner had his will.

As we endeavoured to proceed conjointly our respective manners proved so widely different, that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. The *Ancient Mariner* grew and grew, till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds;

and we began to think of a volume, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium."

The volume of *Lyrical Ballads*, whose first beginnings have here been traced, was published in the autumn of 1798, by Mr. Cottle, at Bristol. This volume contained several poems which have been justly blamed for triviality, —as *The Thorn*, *Goody Blake*, *The Idiot Boy*; several in which, as in *Simon Lee*, triviality is mingled with much real pathos; and some, as *Expostulation and Reply* and *The Tables Turned*, which are of the very essence of Wordsworth's nature. It is hardly too much to say, that if these two last-named poems—to the careless eye so slight and trifling—were all that had remained from Wordsworth's hand, they would have "spoken to the comprehending" of a new individuality, as distinct and unmistakeable in its way as that which Sappho has left engraven on the world for ever in words even fewer than these. And the volume ended with a poem which Wordsworth composed in 1798, in one day, during a tour with his sister to Tintern and Chepstow. The *Lines written above Tintern Abbey* have become, as it were, the *locus classicus* or consecrated formulary of the Wordsworthian faith. They say in brief what it is the work of the poet's biographer to say in detail.

As soon as this volume was published Wordsworth and his sister sailed for Hamburg, in the hope that their imperfect acquaintance with the German language might be improved by the heroic remedy of a winter at Goslar. But at Goslar they do not seem to have made any acquaintances, and their self-improvement consisted mainly in reading German books to themselves. The four months

spent at Goslar, however, were the very bloom of Wordsworth's poetic career. Through none of his poems has the peculiar loveliness of English scenery and English girlhood shone more delicately than through those which came to him as he paced the frozen gardens of that desolate city. Here it was that he wrote *Lucy Gray*, and *Ruth*, and *Nutting*, and the *Poet's Epitaph*, and other poems known now to most men as possessing in its full fragrance his especial charm. And here it was that the memory of some emotion prompted the lines on *Lucy*. Of the history of that emotion he has told us nothing; I forbear, therefore, to inquire concerning it, or even to speculate. That it was to the poet's honour I do not doubt; but who ever learned such secrets rightly? or who should wish to learn? It is best to leave the sanctuary of all hearts inviolate, and to respect the reserve not only of the living but of the dead. Of these poems, almost alone, Wordsworth in his autobiographical notes has said nothing whatever. One of them he suppressed for years, and printed only in a later volume. One can, indeed, well imagine that there may be poems which a man may be willing to give to the world only in the hope that their pathos will be, as it were, protected by its own intensity, and that those who are worthiest to comprehend will be least disposed to discuss them.

The autobiographical notes on his own works above alluded to were dictated by the poet to his friend Miss Isabella Fenwick, at her urgent request, in 1843, and preserve many interesting particulars as to the circumstances under which each poem was composed. They are to be found printed entire among Wordsworth's prose works, and I shall therefore cite them only occasionally. Of *Lucy Gray*, for instance, he says,—

"It was founded on a circumstance told me by my sister, of a little girl who, not far from Halifax, in Yorkshire, was bewildered in a snowstorm. Her footsteps were tracked by her parents to the middle of the lock of a canal, and no other vestige of her, backward or forward, could be traced. The body, however, was found in the canal. The way in which the incident was treated, and the spiritualizing of the character, might furnish hints for contrasting the imaginative influences which I have endeavoured to throw over common life, with Crabbe's matter-of-fact style of handling subjects of the same kind."

And of the *Lines written in Germany*, 1798-9,—

"A bitter winter it was when these verses were composed by the side of my sister, in our lodgings, at a draper's house, in the romantic imperial town of Goslar, on the edge of the Hartz forest. So severe was the cold of this winter, that when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron. I slept in a room over a passage that was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say, rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night; but with the protection of a pelisse lined with fur, and a dog's-skin bonnet, such as was worn by the peasants, I walked daily on the ramparts or on a sort of public ground or garden, in which was a pond. Here I had no companion but a kingfisher, a beautiful creature that used to glance by me. I consequently became much attached to it. During these walks I composed *The Poet's Epitaph*."

Seldom has there been a more impressive instance of the contrast, familiar to biographers, between the apparent insignificance and the real importance of their hero in undistinguished youth. To any one considering Wordsworth as he then was,—a rough and somewhat stubborn young man, who, in nearly thirty years of life, had seemed alternately to idle without grace and to study without advantage,—it might well have seemed incredible that he could have anything new or valuable to communicate to mankind.

Where had been his experience? or where was the indication of that wealth of sensuous emotion which in such a nature as Keats' seems almost to dispense with experience and to give novelty by giving vividness to such passions as are known to all? If Wordsworth were to impress mankind it must be, one might have thought, by travelling out of himself altogether—by revealing some such energy of imagination as can create a world of romance and adventure in the shyest heart. But this was not so to be. Already Wordsworth's minor poems had dealt almost entirely with his own feelings, and with the objects actually before his eyes; and it was at Goslar that he planned, and on the day of his quitting Goslar that he began, a much longer poem, whose subject was to be still more intimately personal, being the development of his own mind. This poem, dedicated to Coleridge, and written in the form of a confidence bestowed on an intimate friend, was finished in 1805, but was not published till after the poet's death. Mrs. Wordsworth then named it *The Prelude*, indicating thus the relation which it bears to the *Excursion*—or rather, to the projected poem of the *Recluse*, of which the *Excursion* was to form only the Second out of three Divisions. One Book of the First Division of the *Recluse* was written, but is yet unpublished; the Third Division was never even begun, and "the materials," we are told, "of which it would have been formed have been incorporated, for the most part, in the author's other publications." Nor need this change of plan be regretted: didactic poems admit easily of mutilation; and all that can be called plot in this series of works is contained in the *Prelude*, in which we see Wordsworth arriving at those convictions which in the *Excursion* he pauses to expound.

It would be too much to say that Wordsworth has

been wholly successful in the attempt—for such the *Prelude* virtually is—to write an epic poem on his own education. Such a poem must almost necessarily appear tedious and egoistic, and Wordsworth's manner has not tact enough to prevent these defects from being felt to the full. On the contrary, in his constant desire frugally to extract, as it were, its full teaching from the minutest event which has befallen him, he supplements the self-complacency of the autobiographer with the conscientious exactness of the moralist, and is apt to insist on trifles such as lodge in the corners of every man's memory, as if they were unique lessons vouchsafed to himself alone.

Yet it follows from this very temper of mind that there is scarcely any autobiography which we can read with such implicit confidence as the *Prelude*. In the case of this, as of so many of Wordsworth's productions, our first dissatisfaction at the form which the poem assumes yields to a recognition of its fitness to express precisely what the poet intends. Nor are there many men who, in recounting the story of their own lives, could combine a candour so absolute with so much of dignity—who could treat their personal history so impartially as a means of conveying lessons of general truth—or who, while chronicling such small things, could remain so great. The *Prelude* is a book of good augury for human nature. We feel in reading it as if the stock of mankind were sound. The soul seems going on from strength to strength by the mere development of her inborn power. And the scene with which the poem at once opens and concludes—the return to the Lake country as to a permanent and satisfying home—places the poet at last amid his true surroundings, and leaves us to contemplate him as completed by a harmony without him, which he of all men most needed to evoke the harmony within.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ENGLISH LAKES.

THE lakes and mountains of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, are singularly fitted to supply such elements of moral sustenance as Nature's aspects can afford to man. There are, indeed, many mountain regions of greater awfulness; but prospects of ice and terror should be a rare stimulant rather than an habitual food; and the physical difficulties inseparable from immense elevations depress the inhabitant and preoccupy the traveller. There are many lakes under a more lustrous sky; but the healthy activities of life demand a scene brilliant without languor, and a beauty which can refresh and satisfy rather than lull or overpower. Without advancing any untenable claim to British pre-eminence in the matter of scenery, we may, perhaps, follow on both these points the judgment which Wordsworth has expressed in his *Guide to the Lakes*, a work which condenses the results of many years of intimate observation.

"Our tracts of wood and water," he says, "are almost diminutive in comparison (with Switzerland); therefore, as far as sublimity is dependent upon absolute bulk and height, and atmospherical influences in connexion with these, it is obvious that there can be no rivalship. But a short residence among the British mountains will furnish

abundant proof, that, after a certain point of elevation, viz., that which allows of compact and fleecy clouds settling upon, or sweeping over, the summits, the sense of sublimity depends more upon form and relation of objects to each other than upon their actual magnitude; and that an elevation of 3000 feet is sufficient to call forth in a most impressive degree the creative, and magnifying, and softening powers of the atmosphere."

And again, as to climate; "The rain," he says, "here comes down heartily, and is frequently succeeded by clear bright weather, when every brook is vocal, and every torrent sonorous; brooks and torrents which are never muddy even in the heaviest floods. Days of unsettled weather, with partial showers, are very frequent; but the showers, darkening or brightening as they fly from hill to hill, are not less grateful to the eye than finely interwoven passages of gay and sad music are touching to the ear. Vapours exhaling from the lakes and meadows after sunrise in a hot season, or in moist weather brooding upon the heights, or descending towards the valleys with inaudible motion, give a visionary character to everything around them; and are in themselves so beautiful as to dispose us to enter into the feelings of those simple nations (such as the Laplanders of this day) by whom they are taken for guardian deities of the mountains; or to sympathize with others who have fancied these delicate apparitions to be the spirits of their departed ancestors. Akin to these are fleecy clouds resting upon the hill-tops; they are not easily managed in picture, with their accompaniments of blue sky, but how glorious are they in nature! how pregnant with imagination for the poet! And the height of the Cumbrian mountains is sufficient to exhibit daily and hourly instances of

those mysterious attachments. Such clouds, cleaving to their stations, or lifting up suddenly their glittering heads from behind rocky barriers, or hurrying out of sight with speed of the sharpest edge, will often tempt an inhabitant to congratulate himself on belonging to a country of mists and clouds and storms, and make him think of the blank sky of Egypt, and of the cerulean vacancy of Italy, as an unanimated and even a sad spectacle."

The consciousness of a preceding turmoil brings home to us best the sense of perfect peace; and a climate accustomed to storm-cloud and tempest can melt sometimes into "a day as still as heaven" with a benignant tranquillity which calmer regions can scarcely know. Such a day Wordsworth has described in language of such delicate truth and beauty as only a long and intimate love can inspire:

"It has been said that in human life there are moments worth ages. In a more subdued tone of sympathy may we affirm, that in the climate of England there are, for the lover of Nature, days which are worth whole months, I might say, even years. One of these favoured days sometimes occurs in springtime, when that soft air is breathing over the blossoms and newborn verdure which inspired Buchanan with his beautiful Ode to the First of May; the air which, in the luxuriance of his fancy, he likens to that of the golden age,—to that which gives motion to the funereal cypresses on the banks of Lethe; to the air which is to salute beatified spirits when expiatory fires shall have consumed the earth with all her habitations. But it is in autumn that days of such affecting influence most frequently intervene. The atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely harmonized; and, in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments.

A resident in a country like this which we are treating of will agree with me that the presence of a lake is indispensable to exhibit in perfection the beauty of one of these days; and he must have experienced, while looking on the unruffled waters, that the imagination by their aid is carried into recesses of feeling otherwise impenetrable. The reason of this is, that the heavens are not only brought down into the bosom of the earth, but that the earth is mainly looked at, and thought of, through the medium of a purer element. The happiest time is when the equinoctial gales are departed; but their fury may probably be called to mind by the sight of a few shattered boughs, whose leaves do not differ in colour from the faded foliage of the stately oaks from which these relics of the storm depend: all else speaks of tranquillity; not a breath of air, no restlessness of insects, and not a moving object perceptible—except the clouds gliding in the depths of the lake, or the traveller passing along, an inverted image, whose motion seems governed by the quiet of a time to which its archetype, the living person, is perhaps insensible; or it may happen that the figure of one of the larger birds, a raven or a heron, is crossing silently among the reflected clouds, while the voice of the real bird, from the element aloft, gently awakens in the spectator the recollection of appetites and instincts, pursuits and occupations, that deform and agitate the world, yet have no power to prevent nature from putting on an aspect capable of satisfying the most intense cravings for the tranquil, the lovely, and the perfect, to which man, the noblest of her creatures, is subject."

The scene described here is one as exquisite in detail as majestic in general effect. And it is characteristic of the region to which Wordsworth's love was given that there is no corner of it without a meaning and a charm; that the open record of its immemorial past tells us at every turn that all agencies have conspired for loveliness and ruin itself has been benign. A passage of Wordsworth's describing the character of the lake-shores illustrates this fact with loving minuteness.

"Sublimity is the result of nature's first great dealings with the superficies of the Earth; but the general tendency of her subsequent operations is towards the production of beauty, by a multiplicity of symmetrical parts uniting in a consistent whole. This is everywhere exemplified along the margins of these lakes. Masses of rock, that have been precipitated from the heights into the area of waters, lie in some places like stranded ships, or have acquired the compact structure of jutting piers, or project in little peninsulas crested with native wood. The smallest rivulet, one whose silent influx is scarcely noticeable in a season of dry weather, so faint is the dimple made by it on the surface of the smooth lake, will be found to have been not useless in shaping, by its deposits of gravel and soil in time of flood, a curve that would not otherwise have existed. But the more powerful brooks, encroaching upon the level of the lake, have, in course of time, given birth to ample promontories of sweeping outline, that contrast boldly with the longitudinal base of the steeps on the opposite shore; while their flat or gently-sloping surfaces never fail to introduce, into the midst of desolation and barrenness, the elements of fertility, even where the habitations of men may not have been raised."

With this we may contrast, as a companion picture, the poet's description of the tarns, or lonely bodies of water, which lie here and there among the hills:

"They are difficult of access and naked; yet some of them are, in their permanent forms, very grand, and there are accidents of things which would make the meanest of them interesting. At all events, one of these pools is an acceptable sight to the mountain wanderer, not merely as an incident that diversifies the prospect, but as forming in his mind a centre or conspicuous point to which objects, otherwise disconnected or insubordinated, may be referred. Some few have a varied outline, with bold heath-clad promontories; and as they mostly lie at the foot of a steep precipice, the water, where the sun is not shining upon it, appears black and sullen, and round the margin huge stones and masses of rock are scattered, some defying conjecture

as to the means by which they came thither, and others obviously fallen from on high, the contribution of ages! A not unpleasing sadness is induced by this perplexity, and these images of decay; while the prospect of a body of pure water, unattended with groves and other cheerful rural images by which fresh water is usually accompanied, and unable to give furtherance to the meagre vegetation around it, excites a sense of some repulsive power strongly put forth, and thus deepens the melancholy natural to such scenes."

To those who love to deduce the character of a population from the character of their race and surroundings the peasantry of Cumberland and Westmoreland form an attractive theme. Drawn in great part from the strong Scandinavian stock, they dwell in a land solemn and beautiful as Norway itself, but without Norway's rigour and penury, and with still lakes and happy rivers instead of Norway's inarming melancholy sea. They are a mountain folk; but their mountains are no precipices of insuperable snow, such as keep the dwellers in some Swiss hamlet shut in ignorance and stagnating into idiocy. These barriers divide only to concentrate, and environ only to endear; their guardianship is but enough to give an added unity to each group of kindred homes. And thus it is that the Cumbrian dalesmen have afforded perhaps as near a realization as human fates have yet allowed of the rural society which statesmen desire for their country's greatness. They have given an example of substantial comfort strenuously won; of home affections intensified by independent strength; of isolation without ignorance, and of a shrewd simplicity; of an hereditary virtue which needs no support from fanaticism, and to which honour is more than law.

The school of political economists, moreover, who urge the advantage of a peasant proprietary—of small inde-

pendent holdings,—as at once drawing from the land the fullest produce and rearing upon it the most vigorous and provident population,—this school, as is well known, finds in the *statesmen* of Cumberland one of its favourite examples. In the days of border-wars, when the first object was to secure the existence of as many armed men as possible, in readiness to repel the Scot, the abbeys and great proprietors in the north readily granted small estates on military tenure, which tenure, when personal service in the field was no longer needed, became in most cases an absolute ownership. The attachment of these *statesmen* to their hereditary estates, the heroic efforts which they would make to avoid parting with them, formed an impressive phenomenon in the little world—a world at once of equality and of conservatism—which was the scene of Wordsworth's childish years, and which remained his manhood's ideal.

The growth of large fortunes in England, and the increased competition for land, has swallowed up many of these small independent holdings in the extensive properties of wealthy men. And at the same time the spread of education, and the improved poor-laws and other legislation, by raising the condition of other parts of England, have tended to obliterate the contrast which was so marked in Wordsworth's day. How marked that contrast was, a comparison of Crabbe's poems with Wordsworth's will sufficiently indicate. Both are true painters; but while in the one we see poverty as something gross and degrading, and the *Tales of the Village* stand out from a background of pauperism and crime; in the other picture poverty means nothing worse than privation, and the poet in the presence of the most tragic outcast of fortune could still

Have laughed himself to scorn, to find
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.

Nay, even when a state far below the *Leech-Gatherer's* has been reached, and mind and body alike are in their last decay, the life of the *Old Cumberland Beggar*, at one remove from nothingness, has yet a dignity and a usefulness of its own. His fading days are passed in no sad asylum of vicious or gloomy age, but amid neighbourly kindnesses, and in the sanity of the open air; and a life that is reduced to its barest elements has yet a hold on the liberality of nature and the affections of human hearts.

So long as the inhabitants of a region thus solitary and beautiful have neither many arts nor many wishes, save such as the Nature which they know has suggested, and their own handiwork can satisfy, so long are their presence and habitations likely to be in harmony with the scenes around them. Nay, man's presence is almost always needed to draw out the full meaning of Nature, to illustrate her bounty by his glad well-being and to hint by his contrivances of precaution at her might and terror. Wordsworth's description of the cottages of Cumberland depicts this unconscious adaptation of man's abode to his surroundings, with an eye which may be called at pleasure that of painter or of poet.

"The dwelling-houses, and contiguous outhouses, are in many instances of the colour of the native rock out of which they have been built; but frequently the dwelling—or Fire-house, as it is ordinarily called—has been distinguished from the barn or byre by roughcast and whitewash, which, as the inhabitants are not hasty in renewing it, in a few years acquires by the influence of weather a tint at once sober and variegated. As these houses have been, from father to son, inhabited by persons engaged in the same occupations, yet necessarily with changes in their

circumstances, they have received without incongruity additions and accommodations adapted to the needs of each successive occupant, who, being for the most part proprietor, was at liberty to follow his own fancy, so that these humble dwellings remind the contemplative spectator of a production of Nature, and may (using a strong expression) rather be said to have grown than to have been erected—to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock—so little is there in them of formality, such is their wildness and beauty.

"These dwellings, mostly built, as has been said, of rough unhewn stone, are roofed with slates, which were rudely taken from the quarry before the present art of splitting them was understood, and are therefore rough and uneven in their surface, so that both the coverings and sides of the houses have furnished places of rest for the seeds of lichens, mosses, ferns and flowers. Hence buildings, which in their very form call to mind the processes of Nature, do thus, clothed in part with a vegetable garb, appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things, as it acts and exists among the woods and fields, and by their colour and their shape affectingly direct the thoughts to that tranquil course of nature and simplicity along which the humble-minded inhabitants have through so many generations been led. Add the little garden with its shed for bee-hives, its small bed of potherbs, and its borders and patches of flowers for Sunday posies, with sometimes a choice few too much prized to be plucked; an orchard of proportioned size; a cheesepress, often supported by some tree near the door; a cluster of embowering sycamores for summer shade, with a tall fir through which the winds sing when other trees are leafless; the little rill or household spout murmuring in all seasons,—combine these incidents and images together, and you have the representative idea of a mountain cottage in this country—so beautifully formed in itself, and so richly adorned by the hand of Nature."

These brief descriptions may suffice to indicate the general character of a district which in Wordsworth's early days had a distinctive unity which he was the first fully to appreciate, which was at its best during his long

lifetime, and which has already begun to disappear. The mountains had waited long for a full adoration, an intelligent worship. At last "they were enough beloved." And if now the changes wrought around them recall too often the poet's warning, how

> All that now delights thee, from the day
> On which it should be touched, shall melt, and melt away,—

yet they have gained something which cannot be taken from them. Not mines, nor railways, nor monster excursions, nor reservoirs, nor Manchester herself, "toute entière à sa proie attachée," can deprive lake and hill of Wordsworth's memory, and the love which once they knew.

Wordsworth's life was from the very first so ordered as to give him the most complete and intimate knowledge both of district and people. There was scarcely a mile of ground in the Lake country over which he had not wandered; scarcely a prospect which was not linked with his life by some tie of memory. Born at Cockermouth, on the outskirts of the district, his mind was gradually led on to its beauty; and his first recollections were of Derwent's grassy holms and rocky falls, with Skiddaw, "bronzed with deepest radiance," towering in the eastern sky. Sent to school at Hawkshead at eight years old, Wordsworth's scene was transferred to the other extremity of the lake district. It was in this quaint old town, on the banks of Esthwaite Water, that the "fair seed-time of his soul" was passed; it was here that his boyish delight in exercise and adventure grew, and melted in its turn into a more impersonal yearning, a deeper absorption into the beauty and the wonder of the world. And even the records of his boyish amusements come

to us each on a background of Nature's majesty and calm. Setting springs for woodcock on the grassy moors at night, at nine years old, he feels himself "a trouble to the peace" that dwells among the moon and stars overhead; and when he has appropriated a woodcock caught by somebody else, "sounds of undistinguishable motion" embody the viewless pursuit of Nemesis among the solitary hills. In the perilous search for the raven's nest, as he hangs on the face of the naked crags of Yewdale, he feels for the first time that sense of detachment from external things which a position of strange unreality will often force on the mind.

> Oh, at that time
> When on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
> With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
> Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
> Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

The innocent rapine of *nutting* taught him to feel that there is a spirit in the woods—a presence which too rude a touch of ours will desecrate and destroy.

The neighbouring lakes of Coniston, Esthwaite, Windermere, have left similar traces of the gradual upbuilding of his spirit. It was on a promontory on Coniston that the sun's last rays, gilding the eastern hills above which he had first appeared, suggested the boy's first impulse of spontaneous poetry, in the resolve that, wherever life should lead him, his last thoughts should fall on the scenes where his childhood was passing now. It was on Esthwaite that the "huge peak" of Wetherlam, following him (as it seemed) as he rowed across the starlit water, suggested the dim conception of "unknown modes of being," and a life that is not ours. It was round Esthwaite that the boy used to wander with a friend at early dawn, rejoicing in the

charm of words in tuneful order, and repeating together their favourite verses, till "sounds of exultation echoed through the groves." It was on Esthwaite that the band of skaters "hissed along the polished ice in games confederate," from which Wordsworth would sometimes withdraw himself and pause suddenly in full career, to feel in that dizzy silence the mystery of a rolling world.

A passage, less frequently quoted, in describing a boating excursion on Windermere illustrates the effect of some small point of human interest in concentrating and realising the diffused emotion which radiates from a scene of beauty:

> But, ere nightfall,
> When in our pinnace we returned at leisure
> Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
> Of some small island steered our course with one,
> The minstrel of the troop, and left him there,
> And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
> Alone upon the rock—oh, then the calm
> And dead still water lay upon my mind
> Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
> Never before so beautiful, sank down
> Into my heart, and held me like a dream!

The passage which describes the schoolboy's call to the owls—the lines of which Coleridge said that he should have exclaimed "Wordsworth!" if he had met them running wild in the deserts of Arabia,—paint a somewhat similar rush of feeling with a still deeper charm. The "gentle shock of mild surprise" which in the pauses of the birds' jocund din *carries far into his heart the sound of mountain torrents*—the very mingling of the grotesque and the majestic—brings home the contrast between our transitory energies and the mystery around us which returns ever the same to the moments when we pause and are at peace.

It is round the two small lakes of Grasmere and Rydal that the memories of Wordsworth are most thickly clustered. On one or other of these lakes he lived for fifty years,—the first half of the present century; and there is not in all that region a hillside walk or winding valley which has not heard him murmuring out his verses as they slowly rose from his heart. The cottage at Town-end, Grasmere, where he first settled, is now surrounded by the out-buildings of a busy hotel; and the noisy stream of traffic, and the sight of the many villas which spot the valley, give a new pathos to the sonnet in which Wordsworth deplores the alteration which even his own residence might make in the simplicity of the lonely scene.

Well may'st thou halt, and gaze with brightening eye!
The lovely Cottage in the guardian nook
Hath stirred thee deeply; with its own dear brook,
Its own small pasture, almost its own sky!
But covet not the Abode: forbear to sigh,
As many do, repining while they look;
Intruders—who would tear from Nature's book
This precious leaf with harsh impiety.
Think what the home must be if it were thine,
Even thine, though few thy wants! Roof, window, door,
The very flowers are sacred to the Poor,
The roses to the porch which they entwine:
Yea, all that now enchants thee, from the day
On which it should be touched, would melt, and melt away.

The *Poems on the Naming of Places* belong for the most part to this neighbourhood. *Emma's Dell* on Easdale Beck, *Point Rash-Judgment* on the eastern shore of Grasmere, *Mary's Pool* in Rydal Park, *William's Peak* on Stone Arthur, *Joanna's Rock* on the banks of Rotha, and *John's Grove* near White Moss Common, have been identified by the loving search of those to whom every memorial of that simple-hearted family group has still a charm.

It is on Greenhead Ghyll—"upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale"—that the poet has laid the scene of *Michael*, the poem which paints with such detailed fidelity both the inner and the outward life of a typical Westmoreland "statesman." And the upper road from Grasmere to Rydal, superseded now by the road along the lake side, and left as a winding footpath among rock and fern, was one of his most habitual haunts. Of another such haunt his friend Lady Richardson says, "The *Prelude* was chiefly composed in a green mountain terrace, on the Easdale side of Helm Crag, known by the name of Under Lancrigg, a place which he used to say he knew by heart. The ladies sat at their work on the hill-side, while he walked to and fro on the smooth green mountain turf, humming out his verses to himself, and then repeating them to his sympathising and ready scribes, to be noted down on the spot, and transcribed at home."

The neighbourhood of the poet's later home at Rydal Mount is equally full of associations. Two of the *Evening Voluntaries* were composed by the side of Rydal Mere. The *Wild Duck's Nest* was on one of the Rydal islands. It was on the fells of Loughrigg that the poet's fancy loved to plant an imperial castle. And *Wansfell's* green slope still answers with many a change of glow and shadow to the radiance of the sinking sun.

Hawkshead and Rydal, then, may be considered as the poet's principal centres, and the scenery in their neighbourhood has received his most frequent attention. The Duddon, a seldom-visited stream on the south-west border of the Lake-district, has been traced by him from source to outfall in a series of sonnets. Langdale, and Little Langdale with Blea Tarn lying in it, form the principal scene of the discourses in the *Excursion*. The more

distant lakes and mountains were often visited and are often alluded to. The scene of *The Brothers*, for example, is laid in Ennerdale; and the index of the minor poems will supply other instances. But it is chiefly round two lines of road leading from Grasmere that Wordsworth's associations cluster,—the route over Dunmailraise, which led him to Keswick, to Coleridge and Southey at Greta Hall, and to other friends in that neighbourhood; and the route over Kirkstone, which led him to Ullswater, and the friendly houses of Patterdale, Hallsteads, and Lowther Castle. The first of these two routes was that over which the *Waggoner* plied; it skirts the lovely shore of Thirlmere,—a lonely sheet of water, of exquisite irregularity of outline, and fringed with delicate verdure, which the Corporation of Manchester has lately bought to embank it into a reservoir. *Dedecorum pretiosus emptor!* This lake was a favourite haunt of Wordsworth's; and upon a rock on its margin, where he and Coleridge, coming from Keswick and Grasmere, would often meet, the two poets, with the other members of Wordsworth's loving household group, inscribed the initial letters of their names. To the "monumental power" of this Rock of Names Wordsworth appeals, in lines written when the happy company who engraved them had already been severed by distance and death:

> O thought of pain,
> That would impair it or profane!
> And fail not Thou, loved Rock, to keep
> Thy charge when we are laid asleep.

The rock may still be seen, but is to be submerged in the new reservoir. In the vale of Keswick itself, Applethwaite, Skiddaw, St. Herbert's Island, Lodore,

are commemorated in sonnets or inscriptions. And the Borrowdale yew-trees have inspired some of the poet's noblest lines,—lines breathing all the strange forlornness of Glaramara's solitude, and the withering vault of shade.

The route from Rydal to Ullswater is still more thickly studded with poetic allusions. The *Pass of Kirkstone* is the theme of a characteristic ode; Grisdale Tarn and Helvellyn recur again and again; and Aira Force was one of the spots which the poet best loved to describe, as well as to visit. It was on the shores of Further Gowbarrow that the *Daffodils* danced beneath the trees. These references might be much further multiplied; and the loving diligence of disciples has set before us "the Lake-district as interpreted by Wordsworth" through a multitude of details. But enough has been said to show how completely the poet had absorbed the influences of his dwelling-place; how unique a representative he had become of the lovely district of his birth; how he had made it subject to him by comprehending it, and his own by love.

He visited other countries and described other scenes. Scotland, Wales, Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, have all a place in his works. His familiarity with other scenery helped him, doubtless, to a better appreciation of the lake country than he could have gained had he never left it. And, on the other hand, like Cæsar in Gaul, or Wellington in the Peninsula, it was because he had so complete a grasp of this chosen base of operations that he was able to come, to see, and to make his own, so swiftly and unfailingly elsewhere. Happy are those whose deep-rooted memories cling like his about some stable home! whose notion of the world around them has expanded from some prospect of happy tranquillity, instead of being drawn

at random from the confusing city's roar! Happier still if that early picture be of one of those rare scenes which have inspired poets and prophets with the retrospective day-dream of a patriarchal, or a golden, age; of some plot of ground like the Ithaca of Odysseus, τρηχεῖ, ἀλλ' ἀγαθὴ κουροτρόφος, "rough, but a nurse of men;" of some life like that which a poet of kindred spirit to Wordsworth's saw half in vision, half in reality, among the husbandmen of the Italian hills:—

> Peace, peace is theirs, and life no fraud that knows,
> Wealth as they will, and when they will, repose:
> On many a hill the happy homesteads stand,
> The living lakes through many a vale expand;
> Cool glens are there, and shadowy caves divine,
> Deep sleep, and far-off voices of the kine;—
> From moor to moor the exulting wild deer stray;—
> The strenuous youth are strong and sound as they;
> One reverence still the untainted race inspires,
> God their first thought, and after God their sires;—
> These last discerned Astræa's flying hem,
> And Virtue's latest footsteps walked with them.

CHAPTER V.

MARRIAGE—SOCIETY—HIGHLAND TOUR.

WITH Wordsworth's settlement at Townend, Grasmere, in the closing days of the last century, the external events of his life may be said to come to an end. Even his marriage to Miss Mary Hutchinson, of Penrith, on October 4, 1802, was not so much an importation into his existence of new emotion, as a development and intensification of feelings which had long been there. This marriage was the crowning stroke of Wordsworth's felicity—the poetic recompense for his steady advocacy of all simple and noble things. When he wished to illustrate the true dignity and delicacy of rustic lives he was always accustomed to refer to the Cumbrian folk. And now it seemed that Cumberland requited him for his praises with her choicest boon; found for him in the country town of Penrith, and from the small and obscure circle of his connexions and acquaintance,—nay, from the same dame's school in which he was taught to read,—a wife such as neither rank nor young beauty nor glowing genius enabled his brother bards to win.

Mrs. Wordsworth's poetic appreciativeness, manifest to all who knew her, is attested by the poet's assertion that two of the best lines in the poem of *The Daffodils*—

They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,—

were of her composition. And in all other matters, from the highest to the lowest, she was to him a true helpmate, a companion "dearer far than life and light are dear," and able "in his steep march to uphold him to the end." Devoted to her husband, she nevertheless welcomed not only without jealousy but with delight the household companionship through life of the sister who formed so large an element in his being. Admiring the poet's genius to the full, and following the workings of his mind with a sympathy that never tired, she nevertheless was able to discern, and with unobtrusive care to hide or avert, those errors of manner into which retirement and self-absorption will betray even the gentlest spirit. It speaks, perhaps, equally well for Wordsworth's character that this tendency to a lengthy insistence, in general conversation, on his own feelings and ideas is the worst charge that can be brought against him; and for Mrs. Wordsworth's, that her simple and rustic upbringing had gifted her with a manner so gracious and a tact so ready that in her presence all things could not but go well.

The life which the young couple led was one of primitive simplicity. In some respects it was even less luxurious than that of the peasants around them. They drank water, and ate the simplest fare. Miss Wordsworth had long rendered existence possible for her brother on the narrowest of means by her unselfish energy and skill in household management; and "plain living and high thinking" were equally congenial to the new inmate of the frugal home. Wordsworth gardened; and all together, or oftenest the poet and his sister, wandered almost daily over the neighbouring hills. Narrow means did not pre-

vent them from offering a generous welcome to their few friends, especially Coleridge and his family, who repeatedly stayed for months under Wordsworth's roof. Miss Wordsworth's unpublished letters breathe the very spirit of hospitality in their naive details of the little sacrifices gladly made for the sake of the presence of these honoured guests. But for the most part their life was solitary and uneventful. Books they had few; neighbours almost none; and Miss Wordsworth's diary of these early years describes a life seldom paralleled in its intimate dependence on external nature. I take, almost at random, her account of a single day. "November 24, 1801. Read Chaucer. We walked by Gell's cottage. As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance, perhaps, of fifty yards from our favourite birch-tree; it was yielding to the gust of wind, with all its tender twigs; the sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches; but it was like a spirit of water. After our return William read Spenser to us, and then walked to John's Grove. Went to meet W." And from an unpublished letter of Miss Wordsworth's, of about the same period (September 10, 1800), I extract her description of the new home. "We are daily more delighted with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. Our walks are perpetually varied, and we are more fond of the mountains as our acquaintance with them increases. We have a boat upon the lake, and a small orchard and smaller garden, which, as it is the work of our own hands, we regard with pride and partiality. Our cottage is quite large enough for us, though very small; and we have made it neat and comfortable within doors; and it looks very nice on the outside; for though the roses and honeysuckles which we

have planted against it are only of this year's growth, yet it is covered all over with green leaves and scarlet flowers; for we have trained scarlet beans upon threads, which are not only exceedingly beautiful but very useful, as their produce is immense. We have made a lodging-room of the parlour below stairs, which has a stone floor, therefore we have covered it all over with matting. We sit in a room above stairs, and we have one lodging-room with two single beds, a sort of lumber-room, and a small low unceiled room, which I have papered with newspapers, and in which we have put a small bed. Our servant is an old woman of sixty years of age, whom we took partly out of charity. She was very ignorant, very foolish, and very difficult to teach. But the goodness of her disposition, and the great convenience we should find if my perseverance was successful, induced me to go on."

The sonnets entitled *Personal Talk* give a vivid picture of the blessings of such seclusion. There are many minds which will echo the exclamation with which the poet dismisses his visitors and their gossip:

> Better than such discourse doth silence long,
> Long barren silence, square with my desire;
> To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
> In the loved presence of my cottage fire,
> And listen to the flapping of the flame,
> Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

Many will look with envy on a life which has thus decisively cut itself loose from the world; which is secure from the influx of those preoccupations, at once distracting and nugatory, which deaden the mind to all other stimulus, and split the river of life into channels so minute that it loses itself in the sand.

> Hence have I genial seasons; hence have I
> Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought.

Left to herself, the mind can expatiate in those kingdoms of the spirit bequeathed to us by past generations and distant men, which to the idle are but a garden of idleness, but to those who choose it become a true possession and an ever widening home. Among those "nobler loves and nobler cares" there is excitement without reaction, there is an unwearied and impersonal joy—a joy which can only be held cheap because it is so abundant, and can only disappoint us through our own incapacity to contain it. These delights of study and of solitude Wordsworth enjoyed to the full. In no other poet, perhaps, have the poet's heightened sensibilities been productive of a pleasure so unmixed with pain. The wind of his emotions blew right abaft; he "swam smoothly in the stream of his nature, and lived but one man."

The blessing of meditative and lonely hours must of course be purchased by corresponding limitations. Wordsworth's conception of human character retained to the end an extreme simplicity. Many of life's most impressive phenomena were hid from his eyes. He never encountered any of those rare figures whose aspect seems to justify all traditions of pomp and pre-eminence when they appear amid stately scenes as with a natural sovereignty. He neither achieved nor underwent any of those experiences which can make all high romance seem a part of memory, and bestow as it were a password and introduction into the very innermost of human fates. On the other hand, he almost wholly escaped those sufferings which exceptional natures must needs derive from too close a contact with this commonplace world. It was not his lot—as it has been the lot of so many poets—to move amongst mankind at once as an intimate and a stranger; to travel from disillusionment to disillusionment

and from regret to regret; to construct around him a world of ideal beings, who crumble into dust at his touch; to hope from them what they can neither understand nor accomplish, to lavish on them what they can never repay. Such pain, indeed, may become a discipline; and the close contact with many lives may teach to the poetic nature lessons of courage, of self-suppression, of resolute goodwill, and may transform into an added dignity the tumult of emotions which might else have run riot in his heart. Yet it is less often from moods of self-control than from moods of self-abandonment that the fount of poetry springs; and herein it was that Wordsworth's especial felicity lay—that there was no one feeling in him which the world had either repressed or tainted; that he had no joy which might not be the harmless joy of all; and that therefore it was when he was most unreservedly himself that he was most profoundly human. All that was needful for him was to strike down into the deep of his heart. Or, using his own words, we may compare his tranquil existence to

> A crystal river,
> Diaphanous because it travels slowly,

and in which poetic thoughts rose unimpeded to the surface, like bubbles through the pellucid stream.

The first hint of many of his briefer poems is to be found in his sister's diary:

"April 15, 1802. When we were in the woods below Gowbarrow Park we saw a few *daffodils* close to the water side. As we went along there were more, and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw there was a long belt of them along the shore. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them; some rested their heads on the stones as on a pillow; the rest tossed, and reeled, and

danced, and seemed as if they verily danced with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing."

"July 30, 1802. Left London between five and six o'clock of the morning, outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river, a multitude of little boats, made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge; the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, were spread out endlessly; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles. Arrived at Calais at four in the morning of July 31st. Delightful walks in the evenings, seeing far off in the west the coast of England like a cloud, crested with Dover Castle, the evening star, and the glory of the sky. The reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself; purple waves brighter than precious stones for ever melting away upon the sands."

How simple are the elements of these delights! There is nothing here, except fraternal affection, a sunrise, a sunset, a flock of bright wild flowers; and yet the sonnets on *Westminster Bridge* and *Calais Sands*, and the stanzas on the *Daffodils*, have taken their place among the permanent records of the profoundest human joy.

Another tour,—this time through Scotland,—undertaken in August 1803, inspired Wordsworth with several of his best pieces. Miss Wordsworth's diary of this tour has been lately published, and should be familiar to all lovers of Nature. The sister's journal is indeed the best introduction to the brother's poems. It has not—it cannot have—their dignity and beauty; but it exemplifies the same method of regarding Nature, the same self-identification with her subtler aspects and entrance into her profounder charm. It is interesting to notice how the same impression strikes both minds at once. From the sister's it is quickly reflected in words of exquisite delicacy and simplicity; in the brother's it germinates, and reappears.

it may be months or years afterwards, as the nucleus of a mass of thought and feeling which has grown round it in his musing soul. The travellers' encounter with two Highland girls on the shore of Loch Lomond is a good instance of this. "One of the girls," writes Miss Wordsworth, "was exceedingly beautiful; and the figures of both of them, in grey plaids falling to their feet, their faces only being uncovered, excited our attention before we spoke to them; but they answered us so sweetly that we were quite delighted, at the same time that they stared at us with an innocent look of wonder. I think I never heard the English language sound more sweetly than from the mouth of the elder of these girls, while she stood at the gate answering our inquiries, her face flushed with the rain; her pronunciation was clear and distinct, without difficulty, yet slow, as if like a foreign speech."

A face with gladness overspread!
Soft smiles, by human kindness bred!
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays;
With no restraint, but such as springs
From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach
Of thy few words of English speech:
A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life!
So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind
Thus beating up against the wind.

The travellers saw more of this girl, and Miss Wordsworth's opinion was confirmed. But to Wordsworth his glimpse of her became a veritable romance. He commemorated it in his poem of *The Highland Girl*, soon after his return from Scotland; he narrated it once more in his

poem of *The Three Cottage Girls*, written nearly twenty years afterwards; and "the sort of prophecy," he says in 1843, "with which the verses conclude, has, through God's goodness, been realized; and now, approaching the close of my seventy-third year, I have a most vivid remembrance of her, and the beautiful objects with which she was surrounded." Nay, more; he has elsewhere informed us, with some naïveté, that the first few lines of his exquisite poem to his wife, *She was a phantom of delight*, were originally composed as a description of this Highland maid, who would seem almost to have formed for him ever afterwards a kind of type and image of loveliness.

That such a meeting as this should have formed so long-remembered an incident in the poet's life will appear, perhaps, equally ridiculous to the philosopher and to the man of the world. The one would have given less, the other would have demanded more. And yet the quest of beauty, like the quest of truth, reaps its surest reward when it is disinterested as well as keen; and the true lover of human-kind will often draw his most exquisite moments from what to most men seems but the shadow of a joy. Especially, as in this case, his heart will be prodigal of the impulses of that protecting tenderness which it is the blessing of early girlhood to draw forth unwittingly, and to enjoy unknown,—affections which lead to no declaration, and desire no return; which are the spontaneous effluence of the very Spirit of Love in man; and which play and hover around winning innocence like the coruscations round the head of the unconscious Iulus, a soft and unconsuming flame.

It was well, perhaps, that Wordsworth's romance should come to him in this remote and fleeting fashion. For to the Priest of Nature it was fitting that all things

else should be harmonious, indeed, but accessory; that joy should not be so keen, nor sorrow so desolating, nor love itself so wildly strong, as to prevent him from going out upon the mountains with a heart at peace, and receiving "in a wise passiveness" the voices of earth and heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT—DEATH OF JOHN WORDSWORTH.

THE year 1803 saw the beginning of a friendship which formed a valuable element in Wordsworth's life. Sir George Beaumont, of Coleorton Hall, Leicestershire, a descendant of the dramatist, and representative of a family long distinguished for talent and culture, was staying with Coleridge at Greta Hall, Keswick, when, hearing of Coleridge's affection for Wordsworth, he was struck with the wish to bring Wordsworth also to Keswick, and bought and presented to him a beautiful piece of land at Applethwaite, under Skiddaw, in the hope that he might be induced to settle there. Coleridge was soon afterwards obliged to leave England in search of health, and the plan fell through. A characteristic letter of Wordsworth's records his feelings on the occasion. "Dear Sir George," he writes, "if any person were to be informed of the particulars of your kindness to me, if it were described to him in all its delicacy and nobleness, and he should afterwards be told that I suffered eight weeks to elapse without writing to you one word of thanks or acknowledgment, he would deem it a thing absolutely *impossible*. It is nevertheless true.

"Owing to a set of painful and uneasy sensations

which I have, more or less, at all times about my chest, I deferred writing to you, being at first made still more uncomfortable by travelling, and loathing to do violence to myself in what ought to be an act of pure pleasure and enjoyment, viz. the expression of my deep sense of your goodness. This feeling was indeed so strong in me, as to make me look upon the act of writing to you as a thing not to be done but in my best, my purest, and my happiest moments. Many of these I had, but then I had not my pen, ink, and paper before me, my conveniences, 'my appliances and means to boot;' all which, the moment that I thought of them, seemed to disturb and impair the sanctity of my pleasure. I contented myself with thinking over my complacent feelings, and breathing forth solitary gratulations and thanksgivings, which I did in many a sweet and many a wild place, during my late tour."

The friendship of which this act of delicate generosity was the beginning was maintained till Sir George Beaumont's death in 1827, and formed for many years Wordsworth's closest link with the world of art and culture. Sir George was himself a painter as well as a connoisseur, and his landscapes are not without indications of the strong feeling for nature which he undoubtedly possessed. Wordsworth, who had seen very few pictures, but was a penetrating critic of those which he knew, discerned this vein of true feeling in his friend's work, and has idealized a small landscape which Sir George had given him, in a sonnet which reproduces the sense of happy pause and voluntary fixation with which the mind throws itself into some scene where Art has given

> To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
> The appropriate calm of blest eternity.

There was another pursuit in which Sir George Beaumont was much interested, and in which painter and poet were well fitted to unite. The landscape-gardener, as Wordsworth says, should "work in the spirit of Nature, with an invisible hand of art." And he shows how any real success can only be achieved when the designer is willing to incorporate himself with the scenery around him; to postpone to its indications the promptings of his own pride or caprice; to interpret Nature to herself by completing touches; to correct her with deference, and as it were to caress her without importunity. And rising to that aspect of the question which connects it with human society, he is strenuous in condemnation of that taste, not so much for solitude as for isolation, which can tolerate no neighbourhood, and finds its only enjoyment in the sense of monopoly.

"Laying out grounds, as it is called, may be considered as a liberal art, in some sort like poetry and painting; its object ought to be to move the affections under the control of good sense; and surely the affections of those who have the deepest perception of the beauty of Nature,—who have the most valuable feelings, that is the most permanent, the most independent, the most ennobling, connected with Nature and human life. No liberal art aims merely at the gratification of an individual or a class; the painter or poet is degraded in proportion as he does so. The true servants of the arts pay homage to the human kind as impersonated in unwarped and enlightened minds. If this be so when we are merely putting together words or colours, how much more ought the feeling to prevail when we are in the midst of the realities of things; of the beauty and harmony, of the joy and happiness, of loving creatures; of men and children, of birds and beasts, of hills and streams, and trees and flowers; with the changes of night and day, evening and morning, summer and winter; and all their unwearied actions and energies, as benign in the spirit that animates them

as they are beautiful and grand in that form of clothing which is given to them for the delight of our senses! What then shall we say of many great mansions, with their unqualified expulsion of human creatures from their neighbourhood, happy or not; houses which do what is fabled of the upas tree—breathe out death and desolation! For my part, strip my neighbourhood of human beings, and I should think it one of the greatest privations I could undergo. You have all the poverty of solitude, nothing of its elevation."

This passage is from a letter of Wordsworth's to Sir George Beaumont, who was engaged at the time in rebuilding and laying out Coleorton. The poet himself planned and superintended some of these improvements, and wrote for various points of interest in the grounds inscriptions which form dignified examples of that kind of composition.

Nor was Sir George Beaumont the only friend whom the poet's taste assisted in the choice of a site or the disposition of pleasure-grounds. More than one seat in the Lake-country—among them one home of pre-eminent beauty—have owed to Wordsworth no small part of their ordered charm. In this way, too, the poet is with us still; his presence has a strange reality as we look on some majestic prospect of interwinding lake and mountain which his design has made more beautifully visible to the children's children of those he loved; as we stand, perhaps, in some shadowed garden-ground where his will has had its way,—has framed Helvellyn's far-off summit in an arch of tossing green, and embayed in towering forest-trees the long lawns of a silent Valley,—fit haunt for lofty aspiration and for brooding calm.

But of all woodland ways which Wordsworth's skill designed or his feet frequented, not one was dearer to him,

(if I may pass thus by a gentle transition to another of the strong affections of his life), than a narrow path through a firwood near his cottage, which "was known to the poet's household by the name of John's Grove." For in the year 1800 his brother, John Wordsworth, a few years younger than himself, and captain of an East Indiaman, had spent eight months in the poet's cottage at Grasmere. The two brothers had seen little of each other since childhood, and the poet had now the delight of discovering in the sailor a character congenial to his own, and an appreciation of poetry—and of the *Lyrical Ballads* especially—which was intense and delicate in an unusual degree. In both brothers, too, there was the same love of nature; and after John's departure, the poet pleased himself with imagining the visions of Grasmere which beguiled the watches of many a night at sea, or with tracing the pathway which the sailor's instinct had planned and trodden amid trees so thickly planted as to baffle a less practised skill. John Wordsworth, on the other hand, looked forward to Grasmere as the final goal of his wanderings, and intended to use his own savings to set the poet free from worldly cares.

Two more voyages the sailor made with such hopes as these, and amid a frequent interchange of books and letters with his brother at home. Then, in February 1805, he set sail from Portsmouth, in command of the "Abergavenny" East Indiaman, bound for India and China. Through the incompetence of the pilot who was taking her out of the Channel, the ship struck on the Shambles off the Bill of Portland, on February 5, 1805. "She struck," says Wordsworth, "at 5 p.m. Guns were fired immediately, and were continued to be fired. She was gotten off the rock at half-past seven, but had taken in

so much water, in spite of constant pumping, as to be water-logged. They had, however, hope that she might still be run upon Weymouth sands, and with this view continued pumping and baling till eleven, when she went down. . . . A few minutes before the ship went down my brother was seen talking to the first mate, with apparent cheerfulness; and he was standing on the hen-coop, which is the point from which he could overlook the whole ship, the moment she went down—dying, as he had lived, in the very place and point where his duty stationed him."

"For myself," he continues elsewhere, "I feel that there is something cut out of my life which cannot be restored. I never thought of him but with hope and delight. We looked forward to the time, not distant, as we thought, when he would settle near us—when the task of his life would be over, and he would have nothing to do but reap his reward. By that time I hoped also that the chief part of my labours would be executed, and that I should be able to show him that he had not placed a false confidence in me. I never wrote a line without a thought of giving him pleasure; my writings, printed and manuscript, were his delight, and one of the chief solaces of his long voyages. But let me stop. I will not be cast down; were it only for his sake I will not be dejected. I have much yet to do, and pray God to give me strength and power: his part of the agreement between us is brought to an end, mine continues; and I hope when I shall be able to think of him with a calmer mind, that the remembrance of him dead will even animate me more than the joy which I had in him living."

In these and the following reflections there is nothing of novelty; yet there is an interest in the spectacle of

this strong and simple mind confronted with the universal problems, and taking refuge in the thoughts which have satisfied, or scarcely satisfied, so many generations of mourning men.

"A thousand times have I asked myself, as your tender sympathy led me to do, 'Why was he taken away?' and I have answered the question as you have done. In fact there is no other answer which can satisfy, and lay the mind at rest. Why have we a choice, and a will, and a notion of justice and injustice, enabling us to be moral agents? Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the Supreme Governor? Why should our notions of right towards each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be His notion and rule, *if every thing were to end here?* Would it not be blasphemy to say that, upon the supposition of the thinking principle being *destroyed by death*, however inferior we may be to the great Cause and Ruler of things we have *more of love* in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of *another* and a *better world*, I do not see."

From this calamity, as from all the lessons of life, Wordsworth drew all the benefit which it was empowered to bring. "A deep distress hath humanized my soul,"—what lover of poetry does not know the pathetic lines in which he bears witness to the teaching of sorrow? Other griefs, too, he had—the loss of two children in 1812; his sister's chronic illness, beginning in 1832; his daughter's death in 1847. All these he felt to the full; and yet, until his daughter's death, which was more than his failing energies could bear, these bereavements were but the

thinly-scattered clouds "in a great sea of blue"—seasons of mourning here and there among years which never lost their hold on peace; which knew no shame and no remorse, no desolation and no fear; whose days were never long with weariness, nor their nights broken at the touch of woe. Even when we speak of his tribulations, it is his happiness which rises in our minds.

And inasmuch as this felicity is the great fact of Wordsworth's life—since his history is for the most part but the history of a halycon calm—we find ourselves forced upon the question whether such a life is to be held desirable or no. Happiness with honour was the ideal of Solon; is it also ours? To the modern spirit,—to the Christian, in whose ears counsels of perfection have left "a presence that is not to be put by," this question, at which a Greek would have smiled, is of no such easy solution.

To us, perhaps, in computing the fortune of any one whom we hold dear, it may seem more needful to inquire not whether he has had enough of joy, but whether he has had enough of sorrow; whether the blows of circumstance have wholly shaped his character from the rock; whether his soul has taken lustre and purity in the refiner's fire. Nor is it only (as some might say) for violent and faulty natures that sorrow is the best. It is true that by sorrow only can the headstrong and presumptuous spirit be shamed into gentleness and solemnized into humility. But sorrow is used also by the Power above us in cases where we men would have shrunk in horror from so rough a touch. Natures that were already of a heroic unselfishness, of a childlike purity, have been raised ere now by anguish upon anguish, woe after woe, to a height of holiness which we may believe that they

could have reached by no other road. Why should it not be so? since there is no limit to the soul's possible elevation, why should her purifying trials have any assignable end? She is of a metal which can grow for ever brighter in the fiercening flame. And if, then, we would still pronounce the true Beatitudes not on the rejoicing, the satisfied, the highly-honoured, but after an ancient and sterner pattern, what account are we to give of Wordsworth's long years of blissful calm?

In the first place, we may say that his happiness was as wholly free from vulgar or transitory elements as a man's can be. It lay in a life which most men would have found austere and blank indeed; a life from which not Crœsus only, but Solon would have turned in scorn, a life of poverty and retirement, of long apparent failure, and honour that came tardily at the close; it was a happiness nourished on no sacrifice of other men, on no eager appropriation of the goods of earth, but springing from a single eye and a loving spirit, and wrought from those primary emotions which are the innocent birthright of all. And if it be answered that however truly philosophic, however sacredly pure, his happiness may have been, yet its wisdom and its holiness were without an effort, and, that it is effort which makes the philosopher and the saint: then we must use in answer his own Platonic scheme of things, to express a thought which we can but dimly apprehend; and we must say that though progress be inevitably linked in our minds with struggle, yet neither do we conceive of struggle as without a pause; there must be prospect-places in the long ascent of souls; and the whole of this earthly life—this one existence, standing we know not where among the myriad that have been for us or shall be—may not be too much to occupy

with one of those outlooks of vision and of prophecy, when

> In a season of calm weather
> Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither;
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

CHAPTER VII.

"HAPPY WARRIOR," AND PATRIOTIC POEMS.

THE year 1805, which bereft Wordsworth of a beloved brother, brought with it also another death, which was felt by the whole English nation like a private calamity. The emotion which Wordsworth felt at the news of Trafalgar,—the way in which he managed to intertwine the memories of Nelson and of his own brother in his heart,—may remind us fitly at this point of our story of the distress and perplexity of nations which for so many years surrounded the quiet Grasmere home, and of the strong responsive emotion with which the poet met each shock of European fates.

When England first took up arms against the French revolution, Wordsworth's feeling, as we have seen, had been one of unmixed sorrow and shame. Bloody and terrible as the revolution had become, it was still in some sort representative of human freedom; at any rate it might still seem to contain possibilities of progress such as the retrograde despotisms with which England allied herself could never know. But the conditions of the contest changed before long. France had not the wisdom, the courage, the constancy to play to the end the part for which she had seemed chosen among the nations. It was her conduct towards Switzerland which decisively altered

Wordsworth's view. He saw her valiant spirit of self-defence corrupted into lust of glory; her eagerness for the abolition of unjust privilege turned into a contentment with equality of degradation under a despot's heel. "One man, of men the meanest too,"—for such the First Consul must needs appear to the moralist's eye,—was

> Raised up to sway the world—to do, undo;
> With mighty nations for his underlings.

And history herself seemed vulgarized by the repetition of her ancient tales of war and overthrow on a scale of such apparent magnitude, but with no glamour of distance to hide the baseness of the agencies by which the destinies of Europe were shaped anew. This was an occasion that tried the hearts of men; it was not easy to remain through all those years at once undazzled and untempted, and never in the blackest hour to despair of human virtue.

In his tract on *The Convention of Cintra*, 1808, Wordsworth has given the fullest expression to this undaunted temper:—

"Oppression, its own blind and predestined enemy, has poured this of blessedness upon Spain—that the enormity of the outrages of which she has been the victim has created an object of love and of hatred, of apprehensions and of wishes, adequate (if that be possible) to the utmost demands of the human spirit. The heart that serves in this cause, if it languish, must languish from its own constitutional weakness, and not through want of nourishment from without. But it is a belief propagated in books, and which passes currently among talking men as part of their familiar wisdom, that the hearts of the many *are* constitutionally weak, that they *do* languish, and are slow to answer to the requisitions of things. I entreat those who are in this delusion to look behind them and

about them for the evidence of experience. Now this, rightly understood, not only gives no support to any such belief, but proves that the truth is in direct opposition to it. The history of all ages—tumults after tumults, wars foreign or civil, with short or with no breathing-places from generation to generation; the senseless weaving and interweaving of factions, vanishing, and reviving, and piercing each other like the Northern Lights; public commotions, and those in the breast of the individual; the long calenture to which the Lover is subject; the blast, like the blast of the desert, which sweeps perennially through a frightful solitude of its own making in the mind of the Gamester; the slowly quickening, but ever quickening, descent of appetite down which the Miser is propelled; the agony and cleaving oppression of grief; the ghost-like hauntings of shame; the incubus of revenge; the life-distemper of ambition . . . these demonstrate incontestably that the passions of men, (I mean the soul of sensibility in the heart of man), in all quarrels, in all contests, in all quests, in all delights, in all employments which are either sought by men or thrust upon them, do immeasurably transcend their objects. The true sorrow of humanity consists in this—not that the mind of man fails, but that the cause and demands of action and of life so rarely correspond with the dignity and intensity of human desires; and hence, that which is slow to languish is too easily turned aside and abused. But, with the remembrance of what has been done, and in the face of the interminable evils which are threatened, a Spaniard can never have cause to complain of this while a follower of the tyrant remains in arms upon the Peninsula."

It was passages such as this, perhaps, which led Canning to declare that Wordsworth's pamphlet was the finest piece of political eloquence which had appeared since Burke. And yet if we compare it with Burke, or with the great Greek exemplar of all those who would give speech the cogency of act,—we see at once the causes of its practical failure. In Demosthenes the

thoughts and principles are often as lofty as any patriot can express; but their loftiness, in his speech, as in the very truth of things, seemed but to add to their immediate reality. They were beaten and inwoven into the facts of the hour; action seemed to turn on them as on its only possible pivot; it was as though Virtue and Freedom hung armed in heaven above the assembly, and in the visible likeness of immortal ancestors beckoned upon an urgent way. Wordsworth's mood of mind, on the other hand, as he has depicted it in two sonnets written at the same time as his tract, explains why it was that that appeal was rather a solemn protest than an effective exhortation. In the first sonnet he describes the surroundings of his task,—the dark wood and rocky cave, "the hollow vale which foaming torrents fill with omnipresent murmur:"—

> Here mighty Nature! in this school sublime
> I weigh the hopes and fears of suffering Spain;
> For her consult the auguries of time,
> And through the human heart explore my way,
> And look and listen, gathering whence I may
> Triumph, and thoughts no bondage can restrain.

And then he proceeds to conjecture what effect his tract will produce:—

> I dropped my pen, and listened to the wind,
> That sang of trees uptorn and vessels tost;
> A midnight harmony, and wholly lost
> To the general sense of men, by chains confined
> Of business, care, or pleasure,—or resigned
> To timely sleep. Thought I, the impassioned strain
> Which without aid of numbers I sustain
> Like acceptation from the world will find.

This deliberate and lonely emotion was fitter to inspire

grave poetry than a pamphlet appealing to an immediate crisis. And the sonnets dedicated *To Liberty* (1802-16) are the outcome of many moods like these.

It is little to say of these sonnets that they are the most permanent record in our literature of the Napoleonic war. For that distinction they have few competitors. Two magnificent songs of Campbell's, an ode of Coleridge's, a few spirited stanzas of Byron's—strangely enough there is little besides these that lives in the national memory, till we come to the ode which summed up the long contest a generation later, when its great captain passed away. But these *Sonnets to Liberty* are worthy of comparison with the noblest passages of patriotic verse or prose which all our history has inspired—the passages where Shakespeare brings his rays to focus on "this earth, this realm, this England,"—or where the dread of national dishonour has kindled Chatham to an iron glow,—or where Milton rises from the polemic into the prophet, and Burke from the partisan into the philosopher. The armoury of Wordsworth, indeed, was not forged with the same fire as that of these "invincible knights of old." He had not swayed senates, nor directed policies, nor gathered into one ardent bosom all the spirit of a heroic age. But he had deeply felt what it is that makes the greatness of nations; in that extremity no man was more staunch than he; no man more unwaveringly disdained unrighteous empire, or kept the might of moral forces more steadfastly in view. Not Stein could place a manlier reliance on "a few strong instincts and a few plain rules;" not Fichte could invoke more convincingly the "great allies" which work with "Man's unconquerable mind."

Here and there, indeed, throughout these sonnets are scattered strokes of high poetic admiration or scorn which

could hardly be overmatched in Æschylus. Such is the indignant correction—

> Call not the royal Swede unfortunate,
> Who never did to Fortune bend the knee!

or the stern touch which closes a description of Flaminius' proclamation at the Isthmian games, according liberty to Greece,—

> A gift of that which is not to be given
> By all the blended powers of Earth and Heaven!

Space forbids me to dwell in detail on these noble poems,—on the well-known sonnets to Venice, to Milton, &c.; on the generous tributes to the heroes of the contest,—Schill, Hoffer, Toussaint, Palafox; or on the series which contrast the instinctive greatness of the Spanish people at bay, with Napoleon's lying promises and inhuman pride. But if Napoleon's career afforded to Wordsworth a poetic example, impressive as that of Xerxes to the Greeks, of lawless and intoxicated power, there was need of some contrasted figure more notable than Hoffer or Palafox from which to draw the lessons which great contests can teach of unselfish valour. Was there then any man, by land or sea, who might serve as the poet's type of the ideal hero? To an Englishman, at least, this question carries its own reply. For by a singular destiny England, with a thousand years of noble history behind her, has chosen for her best-loved, for her national hero, not an Arminius from the age of legend, not a Henri Quatre from the age of chivalry, but a man whom men still living have seen and known. For indeed England and all the world as to this man were of one accord; and when in victory, on his ship *Victory*, Nelson passed

away, the thrill which shook mankind was of a nature such as perhaps was never felt at any other death,—so unanimous was the feeling of friends and foes that earth had lost her crowning example of impassioned self-devotedness and of heroic honour.

And yet it might have seemed that between Nelson's nature and Wordsworth's there was little in common. The obvious limitations of the great Admiral's culture and character were likely to be strongly felt by the philosophic poet. And a serious crime, of which Nelson was commonly, though, as now appears, erroneously,[1] supposed to be guilty, was sure to be judged by Wordsworth with great severity.

Wordsworth was, in fact, hampered by some such feelings of disapproval. He even tells us, with that naive affectionateness which often makes us smile, that he has had recourse to the character of his own brother John for the qualities in which the great Admiral appeared to him to have been deficient. But on these hesitations it would be unjust to dwell. I mention them only to bring out the fact that between these two men, so different in outward fates,—between "the adored, the incomparable Nelson" and the homely poet, "retired as noontide dew,"—there was a moral likeness so profound that the ideal of the recluse was realized in the public life of the hero, and, on the other hand, the hero himself is only seen as completely heroic when his impetuous life stands out for us from the solemn background of the poet's calm. And surely these two natures taken together make the perfect Englishman. Nor is there any portrait fitter than that of

[1] The researches of Sir Nicholas Nicolas, (*Letters and Despatches of Lord Nelson*, vol. vii. Appendix), have placed Lord Nelson's connexion with Lady Hamilton in an unexpected light.

The Happy Warrior to go forth to all lands as representing the English character at its height—a figure not ill-matching with "Plutarch's men."

For indeed this short poem is in itself a manual of greatness; there is a Roman majesty in its simple and weighty speech. And what eulogy was ever nobler than that passage where, without definite allusion or quoted name, the poet depicts, as it were, the very summit of glory in the well-remembered aspect of the Admiral in his last and greatest hour?

> Whose powers shed round him, in the common strife,
> Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
> A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
> But who, if he be called upon to face
> Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
> Great issues, good or bad for human kind,
> *Is happy as a Lover, and attired*
> *With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired.*

Or again, where the hidden thought of Nelson's womanly tenderness, of his constant craving for the green earth and home affections in the midst of storm and war, melts the stern verses into a sudden change of tone:—

> He who, though thus endued as with a sense
> And faculty for storm and turbulence,
> *Is yet a Soul whose master-bias leans*
> *To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;*
> Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
> Are at his heart; and such fidelity
> It is his darling passion to approve;—
> More brave for this, that he hath much to love.

Compare with this the end of the *Song at Broughamm Castle*, where, at the words "alas! the fervent harper did not know—" the strain changes from the very spirit of chivalry to the gentleness of Nature's calm. Nothing

can be more characteristic of Wordsworth than contrasts like this. They teach us to remember that his accustomed mildness is the fruit of no indolent or sentimental peace; and that, on the other hand, when his counsels are sternest, and "his voice is still for war," this is no voice of hardness or of vainglory, but the reluctant resolution of a heart which fain would yield itself to other energies, and have no message but of love.

There is one more point in which the character of Nelson has fallen in with one of the lessons which Wordsworth is never tired of enforcing, the lesson that virtue grows by the strenuousness of its exercise, that it gains strength as it wrestles with pain and difficulty, and converts the shocks of circumstance into an energy of its proper glow. The Happy Warrior is one,

> Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
> And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!
> Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
> In face of these doth exercise a power
> Which is our human nature's highest dower;
> Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
> Of their bad influence, and their good receives;
> By objects which might force the soul to abate
> Her feeling, rendered more compassionate;—

and so further, in words which recall the womanly tenderness, the almost exaggerated feeling for others' pain, which showed itself memorably in face of the blazing *Orient*, and in the harbour at Teneriffe, and in the cockpit at Trafalgar.

In such lessons as these,—such lessons as *The Happy Warrior* or the Patriotic Sonnets teach,—there is, of course, little that is absolutely novel. We were already aware that the ideal hero should be as gentle as he is brave, that

he should act always from the highest motives, nor greatly care for any reward save the consciousness of having done his duty. We were aware that the true strength of a nation is moral and not material; that dominion which rests on mere military force is destined quickly to decay; that the tyrant, however admired and prosperous, is in reality despicable, and miserable, and alone; that the true man should face death itself rather than parley with dishonour. These truths are *admitted* in all ages; yet it is scarcely stretching language to say that they are *known* to but few men. Or at least, though in a great nation there be many who will act on them instinctively, and approve them by a self-surrendering faith, there are few who can so put them forth in speech as to bring them home with a fresh conviction and an added glow; who can sum up, like Æschylus, the contrast between Hellenic freedom and barbarian despotism in "one trump's peal that set all Greeks aflame;" can thrill, like Virgil, a world-wide empire with the recital of the august simplicities of early Rome.

To those who would know these things with a vital knowledge—a conviction which would remain unshaken were the whole world in arms for wrong—it is before all things necessary to strengthen the inner monitions by the companionship of these noble souls. And if a poet, by strong concentration of thought, by striving in all things along the upward way, can leave us in a few pages as it were a summary of patriotism, a manual of national honour, he surely has his place among his country's benefactors not only by that kind of courtesy which the nation extends to men of letters of whom her masses take little heed, but with a title as assured as any warrior or statesman, and with no less direct a claim.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHILDREN—LIFE AT RYDAL MOUNT—"THE EXCURSION."

It may be well at this point to return to the quiet chronicle of the poet's life at Grasmere; where his cottage was becoming too small for an increasing family. His eldest son, John, was born in 1803; his eldest daughter, Dorothy or Dora, in 1804. Then came Thomas, born 1806; and Catherine, born 1808; and the list is ended by William, born 1810, and now (1880) the only survivor. In the spring of 1808 Wordsworth left Townend for Allan Bank,—a more roomy, but an uncomfortable house, at the north end of Grasmere. From thence he removed for a time, in 1811, to the Parsonage at Grasmere.

Wordsworth was the most affectionate of fathers, and allusions to his children occur frequently in his poetry. Dora—who was the delight of his later years—has been described at length in *The Triad*. Shorter and simpler, but more completely successful, is the picture of Catherine in the little poem which begins "Loving she is, and tractable, though wild," with its homely simile for childhood—its own existence sufficient to fill it with gladness:

> As a faggot sparkles on the hearth
> Not less if unattended and alone
> Than when both young and old sit gathered round
> And take delight in its activity.

The next notice of this beloved child is in the sonnet, "Surprised by joy, impatient as the wind," written when she had already been removed from his side. She died in 1812, and was closely followed by her brother Thomas. Wordsworth's grief for these children was profound, violent, and lasting, to an extent which those who imagine him as not only calm but passionless might have some difficulty in believing. "Referring once," says his friend Mr. Aubrey de Vere, "to two young children of his who had died about *forty years* previously, he described the details of their illnesses with an exactness and an impetuosity of troubled excitement, such as might have been expected if the bereavement had taken place but a few weeks before. The lapse of time seemed to have left the sorrow submerged indeed, but still in all its first freshness. Yet I afterwards heard that at the time of the illness, at least in the case of one of the two children, it was impossible to rouse his attention to the danger. He chanced to be then under the immediate spell of one of those fits of poetic inspiration which descended on him like a cloud. Till the cloud had drifted, he could see nothing beyond."

This anecdote illustrates the fact, which to those who knew Wordsworth well was sufficiently obvious, that the characteristic calm of his writings was the result of no coldness of temperament but of a deliberate philosophy. The pregnant force of his language in dealing with those dearest to him—his wife, his sister, his brother—is proof enough of this. The frequent allusions in his correspondence to the physical exhaustion brought on by the act of poetical composition indicate a frame which, though made robust by exercise and temperance, was by nature excitable rather than strong. And even in the direction in which we should least have expected it, there is reason

to believe that there were capacities of feeling in him which never broke from his control. "Had I been a writer of love-poetry," he is reported to have said, "it would have been natural to me to write it with a degree of warmth which could hardly have been approved by my principles, and which might have been undesirable for the reader."

Wordsworth's paternal feelings, at any rate, were, as has been said, exceptionally strong; and the impossibility of remaining in a house filled with sorrowful memories rendered him doubly anxious to obtain a permanent home. "The house which I have for some time occupied," he writes to Lord Lonsdale, in January 1813, "is the Parsonage of Grasmere. It stands close by the churchyard, and I have found it absolutely necessary that we should quit a place which, by recalling to our minds at every moment the losses we have sustained in the course of the last year, would grievously retard our progress towards that tranquillity which it is our duty to aim at." It happened that Rydal Mount became vacant at this moment, and in the spring of 1813 the Wordsworths migrated to this their favourite and last abode.

Rydal Mount has probably been oftener described than any other English poet's home since Shakespeare; and few homes, certainly, have been moulded into such close accordance with their inmates' nature. The house, which has been altered since Wordsworth's day, stands looking southward, on the rocky side of Nab Scar, above Rydal Lake. The garden was described by Bishop Wordsworth immediately after his uncle's death, while every terrace-walk and flowering alley spoke of the poet's loving care. He tells of the "tall ash-tree, in which a thrush has sung, for hours together, during many years;" of the

"laburnum in which the osier cage of the doves was hung;" of the stone steps "in the interstices of which grow the yellow flowering poppy, and the wild geranium or Poor Robin,"—

> Gay
> With his red stalks upon a sunny day.

And then of the terraces—one levelled for Miss Fenwick's use, and welcome to himself in aged years; and one ascending, and leading to the "far terrace" on the mountain's side, where the poet was wont to murmur his verses as they came. Within the house were disposed his simple treasures: the ancestral almery, on which the names of unknown Wordsworths may be deciphered still; Sir George Beaumont's pictures of "The White Doe of Rylstone" and "The Thorn," and the cuckoo clock which brought vernal thoughts to cheer the sleepless bed of age, and which sounded its noonday summons when his spirit fled.

Wordsworth's worldly fortunes, as if by some benignant guardianship of Providence, were at all times proportioned to his successive needs. About the date of his removal to Rydal (in March 1813) he was appointed, through Lord Lonsdale's interest, to the distributorship of stamps for the county of Westmoreland, to which office the same post for Cumberland was afterwards added. He held this post till August 1842, when he resigned it without a retiring pension, and it was conferred on his second son. He was allowed to reside at Rydal, which was counted as a suburb of Ambleside; and as the duties of the place were light, and mainly performed by a most competent and devoted clerk, there was no drawback to the advantage of an increase of income which released him from anxiety as to the future. A more lucrative office—the collectorship of Whitehaven—was subsequently offered to him:

but he declined it, "nor would exchange his Sabine valley for riches and a load of care."

Though Wordsworth's life at Rydal was a retired one, it was not that of a recluse. As years went on he became more and more recognized as a centre of spiritual strength and illumination, and was sought not only by those who were already his neighbours, but by some who became so mainly for his sake. Southey at Keswick was a valued friend, though Wordsworth did not greatly esteem him as a poet. De Quincey, originally attracted to the district by admiration for Wordsworth, remained there for many years, and poured forth a criticism strangely compounded of the utterances of the hero-worshipper and the *valet-de-chambre*. Professor Wilson, of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, never showed, perhaps, to so much advantage as when he walked by the side of the master whose greatness he was one of the first to detect. Dr. Arnold of Rugby made the neighbouring home at Fox How a focus of warm affections and of intellectual life. And Hartley Coleridge, whose fairy childhood had inspired one of Wordsworth's happiest pieces, continued to lead among the dales of Westmoreland a life which showed how much of genius and goodness a single weakness can nullify.

Other friends there were, too, less known to fame, but of exceptional powers of appreciation and sympathy. The names of Mrs. Fletcher and her daughters, Lady Richardson and Mrs. Davy, should not be omitted in any record of the poet's life at Rydal. And many humbler neighbours may be recognized in the characters of the *Excursion* and other poems. The *Wanderer*, indeed, is a picture of Wordsworth himself—"an idea," as he says, "of what I fancied my own character might have become in his circumstances." But the *Solitary* was suggested by a broken man

who took refuge in Grasmere from the world in which he had found no peace; and the characters described as lying in the churchyard among the mountains are almost all of them portraits. The clergyman and his family described in Book VII. were among the poet's principal associates in the vale of Grasmere. "There was much talent in the family," says Wordsworth in the memoranda dictated to Miss Fenwick; "and the eldest son was distinguished for poetical talent, of which a specimen is given in my Notes to the *Sonnets on the Duddon.* Once when, in our cottage at Townend, I was talking with him about poetry, in the course of our conversation I presumed to find fault with the versification of Pope, of whom he was an enthusiastic admirer. He defended him with a warmth that indicated much irritation; nevertheless I could not abandon my point, and said, 'In compass and variety of sound your own versification surpasses his.' Never shall I forget the change in his countenance and tone of voice. The storm was laid in a moment; he no longer disputed my judgment; and I passed immediately in his mind, no doubt, for as great a critic as ever lived."

It was with personages simple and unromantic as these that Wordsworth filled the canvas of his longest poem. Judged by ordinary standards the *Excursion* appears an epic without action, and with two heroes, the Pastor and the Wanderer, whose characters are identical. Its form is cumbrous in the extreme, and large tracts of it have little claim to the name of poetry. Wordsworth compares the *Excursion* to a temple of which his smaller poems form subsidiary shrines; but the reader will more often liken the small poems to gems, and the *Excursion* to the rock from which they were extracted. The long poem contains, indeed, magnificent passages, but

as a whole it is a diffused description of scenery which the poet has elsewhere caught in brighter glimpses; a diffused statement of hopes and beliefs which have crystallized more exquisitely elsewhere round moments of inspiring emotion. The *Excursion*, in short, has the drawbacks of a didactic poem as compared with lyrical poems; but, judged as a didactic poem, it has the advantage of containing teaching of true and permanent value.

I shall not attempt to deduce a settled scheme of philosophy from these discourses among the mountains. I would urge only that as a guide to conduct Wordsworth's precepts are not in themselves either unintelligible or visionary. For whereas some moralists would have us amend nature, and others bid us follow her, there is apt to be something impracticable in the first maxim, and something vague in the second. Asceticism, quietism, enthusiasm, ecstasy—all systems which imply an unnatural repression or an unnatural excitation of our faculties—are ill-suited for the mass of mankind. And on the other hand, if we are told to follow nature, to develope our original character, we are too often in doubt as to which of our conflicting instincts to follow, what part of our complex nature to accept as our regulating self. But Wordsworth, while impressing on us conformity to nature as the rule of life, suggests a test of such conformity which can be practically applied. "The child is father of the man,"—in the words which stand as introduction to his poetical works, and Wordsworth holds that the instincts and pleasures of a healthy childhood sufficiently indicate the lines on which our maturer character should be formed. The joy which began in the mere sense of existence should be maintained by hopeful faith; the simplicity which began in inexperience should be recovered by medi-

tation; the love which originated in the family circle should expand itself over the race of men. And the calming and elevating influence of Nature—which to Wordsworth's memory seemed the inseparable concomitant of childish years—should be constantly invoked throughout life to keep the heart fresh and the eyes open to the mysteries discernible through her radiant veil. In a word, the family affections, if duly fostered, the influences of Nature, if duly sought, with some knowledge of the best books, are material enough to "build up our moral being" and to outweigh the less deep-seated impulses which prompt to wrong-doing.

If, then, surrounding influences make so decisive a difference in man's moral lot, what are we to say of those who never have the chance of receiving those influences aright; who are reared, with little parental supervision, in smoky cities, and spend their lives in confined and monotonous labour? One of the most impressive passages in the *Excursion* is an indignant complaint of the injustice thus done to the factory child. Wordsworth was no fanatical opponent of manufacturing industry. He had intimate friends among manufacturers; and in one of his letters he speaks of promising himself much pleasure from witnessing the increased regard for the welfare of factory hands of which one of these friends had set the example. But he never lost sight of the fact that the life of the mill-hand is an anomaly—is a life not in the order of nature, and which requires to be justified by manifest necessity and by continuous care. The question to what extent we may acquiesce in the continuance of a low order of human beings, existing for our enjoyment rather than for their own, may be answered with plausibility in very different tones; from the Communist who cannot rest content

in the inferiority of any one man's position to any other's, to the philosopher who holds that mankind has made the most eminent progress when a few chosen individuals have been supported in easy brilliancy by a population of serfs or slaves. Wordsworth's answer to this question is at once conservative and philanthropic. He holds to the distinction of classes, and thus admits a difference in the fulness and value of human lots. But he will not consent to any social arrangement which implies a necessary *moral* inferiority in any section of the body politic; and he esteems it the statesman's first duty to provide that all citizens shall be placed under conditions of life which, however humble, shall not be unfavourable to virtue.

His views on national education, which at first sight appear so inconsistent, depend on the same conception of national welfare. Wordsworth was one of the earliest and most emphatic proclaimers of the duty of the State in this respect. The lines in which he insists that every child ought to be taught to read are, indeed, often quoted as an example of the moralizing baldness of much of his blank verse. But, on the other hand, when a great impulse was given to education (1820-30) by Bell and Lancaster, by the introduction of what was called the "Madras system" of tuition by pupil-teachers, and the spread of infant schools, Wordsworth was found unexpectedly in the opposite camp. Considering as he did all mental requirements as entirely subsidiary to moral progress, and in themselves of very little value, he objected to a system which, instead of confining itself to reading—that indispensable channel of moral nutriment—aimed at communicating knowledge as varied and advanced as time and funds would allow. He objected to the dissociation

of school and home life—to that relegation of domestic interests and duties to the background, which large and highly-organized schools, and teachers much above the home level, must necessarily involve. And yet more strongly, and, as it may still seem to many minds, with convincing reason, he objected to an eleemosynary system, which "precludes the poor mother from the strongest motive human nature can be actuated by for industry, for forethought, and self-denial." "The Spartan," he said, "and other ancient communities, might disregard domestic ties, because they had the substitution of country, which we cannot have. Our course is to supplant domestic attachments, without the possibility of substituting others more capacious. What can grow out of it but selfishness?" The half-century which has elapsed since Wordsworth wrote these words has evidently altered the state of the question. It has impressed on us the paramount necessity of national education, for reasons political and social too well known to repeat. But it may be feared that it has also shifted the incidence of Wordsworth's arguments in a more sinister manner, by vastly increasing the number of those homes where domestic influence of the kind which the poet saw around him at Rydal is altogether wanting and school is the best avenue even to moral well-being. "Heaven and hell," he writes in 1808, "are scarcely more different from each other than Sheffield and Manchester, &c., differ from the plains and valleys of Surrey, Essex, Cumberland, or Westmoreland." It is to be feared, indeed, that even "the plains and valleys of Surrey and Essex" contain many cottages whose spiritual and sanitary conditions fall far short of the poet's ideal. But it is of course in the great and growing centres of population that the dangers which he dreads have come upon us in

their most aggravated form. And so long as there are in England so many homes to which parental care and the influences of Nature are alike unknown, no protest in favour of the paramount importance of these primary agencies in the formation of character can be regarded as altogether out of date.

With such severe and almost prosaic themes is the greater part of the *Excursion* occupied. Yet the poem is far from being composed throughout in a prosaic spirit. "Of its bones is coral made;" its arguments and theories have lain long in Wordsworth's mind, and have accreted to themselves a rich investiture of observation and feeling. Some of its passages rank among the poet's highest flights. Such is the passage in Book I. describing the boy's rapture at sunrise; and the picture of a sunset at the close of the same book. Such is the opening of Book IV.; and the passage describing the wild joy of roaming through a mountain storm; and the metaphor in the same book which compares the mind's power of transfiguring the obstacles which beset her, with the glory into which the moon incorporates the umbrage that would intercept her beams.

It would scarcely be possible at the present day that a work containing such striking passages, and so much of substance and elevation—however out of keeping it might be with the ruling taste of the day—should appear without receiving careful study from many quarters and warm appreciation in some recognized organs of opinion. Criticism in Wordsworth's day was both less competent and less conscientious, and the famous "This will never do" of Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* was by no means an extreme specimen of the general tone in which the work was received. The judgment of the reviewers

influenced popular taste; and the book was as decided a pecuniary failure as Wordsworth's previous ventures had been.

And here, perhaps, is a fit occasion to speak of that strangely violent detraction and abuse which formed so large an ingredient in Wordsworth's life,—or rather, of that which is the only element of permanent interest in such a matter,—his manner of receiving and replying to it. No writer, probably, who has afterwards achieved a reputation at all like Wordsworth's, has been so long represented by reviewers as purely ridiculous. And in Wordsworth's manner of acceptance of this fact we may discern all the strength, and something of the stiffness, of his nature; we may recognize an almost, but not quite, ideal attitude under the shafts of unmerited obloquy. For he who thus is arrogantly censured should remember both the dignity and the frailty of man; he should wholly forgive, and almost wholly forget; but, nevertheless, should retain such serviceable hints as almost any criticism, however harsh or reckless, can afford, and go on his way with no bitter broodings, but yet (to use Wordsworth's expression in another context) "with a melancholy in the soul, a sinking inward into ourselves from thought to thought, a steady remonstrance, and a high resolve."

How far his own self-assertion may becomingly be carried in reply, is another and a delicate question. There is almost necessarily something distasteful to us not only in self-praise but even in a thorough self-appreciation. We desire of the ideal character that his faculties of admiration should be, as it were, absorbed in an eager perception of the merits of others,—that a kind of shrinking delicacy should prevent him from appraising his own

achievements with a similar care. Often, indeed, there is something most winning in a touch of humorous blindness: "Well, Miss Sophia, and how do *you* like the *Lady of the Lake?*" "Oh, I've not read it; papa says there's nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry."

But there are circumstances under which this graceful absence of self-consciousness can no longer be maintained. When a man believes that he has a message to deliver that vitally concerns mankind, and when that message is received with contempt and apathy, he is necessarily driven back upon himself; he is forced to consider whether what he has to say is after all so important, and whether his mode of saying it be right and adequate. A necessity of this kind was forced upon both Shelley and Wordsworth. Shelley—the very type of self-forgetful enthusiasm—was driven at last by the world's treatment of him into a series of moods sometimes bitter and sometimes self-distrustful—into a sense of aloofness and detachment from the mass of men, which the poet who would fain improve and exalt them should do his utmost not to feel. On Wordsworth's more stubborn nature the effect produced by many years of detraction was of a different kind. Naturally introspective, he was driven by abuse and ridicule into taking stock of himself more frequently and more laboriously than ever. He formed an estimate of himself and his writings which was, on the whole, (as will now be generally admitted,) a just one; and this view he expressed when occasion offered—in sober language, indeed, but with calm conviction, and with precisely the same air of speaking from undoubted knowledge as when he described the beauty of Cumbrian mountains or the virtue of Cumbrian homes.

"It is impossible," he wrote to Lady Beaumont in 1807,

"that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration the envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldlings, of every rank and situation, must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings, and images on which the life of my poems depends. The things which I have taken, whether from within or without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage; with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton? In a word —for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me—what have they to do with endless talking about things that nobody cares anything for, except as far as their own vanity is concerned, and this with persons they care nothing for, but as their vanity or *selfishness* is concerned? What have they to do (to say all at once) with a life without love? In such a life there can be no thought; for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain), but as far as we have love and admiration.

"It is an awful truth, that there neither is nor can be any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one; because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.

"Upon this I shall insist elsewhere; at present let me confine myself to my object, which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy-hearted as myself with respect to these poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception. Of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny?—to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us,) are mouldered in our graves."

Such words as these come with dignity from the mouth of a man like Wordsworth when he has been, as it were, driven to bay,—when he is consoling an intimate friend, distressed at the torrent of ridicule which, as she fears, must sweep his self-confidence and his purposes away. He may be permitted to assure her that "my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings," and to accompany his assurance with a reasoned statement of the grounds of his unshaken hopes.

We feel, however, that such an expression of self-reliance on the part of a great man should be accompanied with some proof that no conceit or impatience is mixed with his steadfast calm. If he believes the public to be really unable to appreciate himself, he must show no surprise when they admire his inferiors; he must remember that the case would be far worse if they admired no one at all. Nor must he descend from his own unpopular merits on the plea that after catching the public attention by what is bad he will retain it for what is good. If he is so sure that he is in the right he can afford to wait and let

the world come round to him. Wordsworth's conduct satisfies both these tests. It is, indeed, curious to observe how much abuse this inoffensive recluse received, and how absolutely he avoided returning it. Byron, for instance, must have seemed in his eyes guilty of something far more injurious to mankind than "a drowsy frowsy poem, called the *Excursion*," could possibly appear. But, except in one or two private letters, Wordsworth has never alluded to Byron at all. Shelley's lampoon—a singular instance of the random blows of a noble spirit, striking at what, if better understood, it would eagerly have revered—Wordsworth seems never to have read. Nor did the violent attacks of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly Reviews* provoke him to any rejoinder. To "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"—leagued against him as their common prey—he opposed a dignified silence; and the only moral injury which he derived from their assaults lay in that sense of the absence of trustworthy external criticism which led him to treat everything which he had once written down as if it were a special revelation, and to insist with equal earnestness on his most trifling as on his most important pieces—on *Goody Blake* and *The Idiot Boy* as on *The Cuckoo* or *The Daffodils*. The sense of humour is apt to be the first grace which is lost under persecution; and much of Wordsworth's heaviness and stiff exposition of commonplaces is to be traced to a feeling, which he could scarcely avoid, that "all day long he had lifted up his voice to a perverse and gainsaying generation."

To the pecuniary loss inflicted on him by these adverse criticisms he was justly sensible. He was far from expecting, or even desiring, to be widely popular or to make a rapid fortune; but he felt that the labourer was worthy of his hire, and that the devotion of years to

literature should have been met with some moderate degree of the usual form of recognition which the world accords to those who work for it. In 1820 he speaks of "the whole of my returns from the writing trade not amounting to seven-score pounds," and as late as 1843, when at the height of his fame, he was not ashamed of confessing the importance which he had always attached to this particular.

"So sensible am I," he says, "of the deficiencies in all that I write, and so far does everything that I attempt fall short of what I wish it to be, that even private publication, if such a term may be allowed, requires more resolution than I can command. I have written to give vent to my own mind, and not without hope that, some time or other, kindred minds might benefit by my labours; but I am inclined to believe I should never have ventured to send forth any verses of mine to the world, if it had not been done on the pressure of personal occasions. Had I been a rich man, my productions, like this *Epistle*, the *Tragedy of the Borderers*, &c., would most likely have been confined to manuscript."

An interesting passage from an unpublished letter of Miss Wordsworth's, on the *White Doe of Rylstone*, confirms this statement:—

"My brother was very much pleased with your frankness in telling us that you did not perfectly like his poem. He wishes to know what your feelings were—whether the tale itself did not interest you—or whether you could not enter into the conception of Emily's character, or take delight in that visionary communion which is supposed to have existed between her and the Doe. Do not fear to give him pain. He is far too much accustomed to be abused to receive pain from it, (at least as far as he himself is concerned.) My reason for asking you these questions is, that some of our friends, who are equal admirers of

the *White Doe* and of my brother's published poems, think that *this* poem will sell on account of the story; that is, that the story will bear up those points which are above the level of the public taste; whereas the two last volumes—except by a few solitary individuals, who are passionately devoted to my brother's works—are abused by wholesale.

"Now as his sole object in publishing this poem at present would be for the sake of the money, he would not publish it if he did not think, from the several judgments of his friends, that it would be likely to have a sale. He has no pleasure in publishing—he even detests it; and if it were not that he is *not* over wealthy, he would leave all his works to be published after his death. William himself is sure that the *White Doe* will not sell or be admired, except by a very few, at first; and only yields to Mary's entreaties and mine. We are determined, however, if we are deceived this time, to let him have his own way in future."

These passages must be taken, no doubt, as representing one aspect only of the poet's impulses in the matter. With his deep conviction of the world's real, though unrecognized, need of a pure vein of poetry, we can hardly imagine him as permanently satisfied to defer his own contribution till after his death. Yet we may certainly believe that the need of money helped him to overcome much diffidence as to publication; and we may discern something dignified in his frank avowal of this when it is taken in connexion with his scrupulous abstinence from any attempt to win the suffrages of the multitude by means unworthy of his high vocation. He could never, indeed, have written poems which could have vied in immediate popularity with those of Byron or Scott. But the criticisms on the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* must have shown him that a slight alteration of method,—nay even the excision of a few pages in each volume, pages certain to be loudly objected to,—would have made a

marked difference in the sale and its proceeds. From this point of view, even poems which we may now feel to have been needlessly puerile and grotesque acquire a certain impressiveness, when we recognize that the theory which demanded their composition was one which their author was willing to uphold at the cost of some years of real physical privation, and of the postponement for a generation of his legitimate fame.

CHAPTER IX.

POETIC DICTION—"LAODAMIA"—"EVENING ODE."

THE *Excursion* appeared in 1814, and in the course of the next year Wordsworth republished his minor poems, so arranged as to indicate the faculty of the mind which he considered to have been predominant in the composition of each. To most readers this disposition has always seemed somewhat arbitrary; and it was once suggested to Wordsworth that a chronological arrangement would be better. The manner in which Wordsworth met this proposal indicated the limit of his absorption in himself—his real desire only to dwell on his own feelings in such a way as might make them useful to others. For he rejected the plan as too egotistical—as emphasizing the succession of moods in the poet's mind, rather than the lessons which those moods could teach. His objection points, at any rate, to a real danger which any man's simplicity of character incurs by dwelling too attentively on the changing phases of his own thought. But after the writer's death the historical spirit will demand that poems, like other artistic products, should be disposed for the most part in the order of time.

In a Preface to this edition of 1815, and a Supplementary Essay, he developed the theory on poetry already set forth in a well-known preface to the second edition of the

Lyrical Ballads. Much of the matter of these essays, received at the time with contemptuous aversion, is now accepted as truth; and few compositions of equal length contain so much of vigorous criticism and sound reflection. It is only when they generalize too confidently that they are in danger of misleading us; for all expositions of the art and practice of poetry must necessarily be incomplete. Poetry, like all the arts, is essentially a "mystery." Its charm depends upon qualities which we can neither define accurately nor reduce to rule nor create again at pleasure. Mankind, however, are unwilling to admit this; and they endeavour from time to time to persuade themselves that they have discovered the rules which will enable them to produce the desired effect. And so much of the effect *can* thus be reproduced, that it is often possible to believe for a time that the problem has been solved. Pope, to take the instance which was prominent in Wordsworth's mind, was, by general admission, a poet. But his success seemed to depend on imitable peculiarities; and Pope's imitators were so like Pope that it was hard to draw a line and say where they ceased to be poets. At last, however, this imitative school began to prove too much. If all the insipid verses which they wrote were poetry, what was the use of writing poetry at all? A reaction succeeded, which asserted that poetry depends on emotion and not on polish; that it consists precisely in those things which frigid imitators lack. Cowper, Burns, and Crabbe, (especially in his *Sir Eustace Grey*), had preceded Wordsworth as leaders of this reaction. But they had acted half unconsciously, or had even at times themselves attempted to copy the very style which they were superseding.

Wordsworth, too, began with a tendency to imitate

Pope, but only in the school exercises which he wrote as a boy. Poetry soon became to him the expression of his own deep and simple feelings; and then he rebelled against rhetoric and unreality and found for himself a directer and truer voice. "I have proposed to myself to imitate and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men. . . . I have taken as much pains to avoid what is usually called poetic diction as others ordinarily take to produce it." And he erected this practice into a general principle in the following passage:—

"I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between poetry and painting, and, accordingly, we call them sisters; but where shall we find bonds of connexion sufficiently strict to typify the affinity between metrical and prose composition? If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what I have been saying on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such poetry as I am recommending is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have? whence is it to come? and where is it to exist?"

There is a definiteness and simplicity about this description of poetry which may well make us wonder why this precious thing (producible, apparently, as easily as Pope's

imitators supposed, although by means different from theirs) is not offered to us by more persons, and of better quality. And it will not be hard to show that a good poetical style must possess certain characteristics, which, although something like them must exist in a good prose style, are carried in poetry to a pitch so much higher as virtually to need a specific faculty for their successful production.

To illustrate the inadequacy of Wordsworth's theory to explain the merits of his own poetry, I select a stanza from one of his simplest and most characteristic poems—*The Affliction of Margaret*:—

> Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
> Maimed, mangled by inhuman men,
> Or thou upon a Desert thrown
> Inheritest the lion's Den;
> Or hast been summoned to the Deep,
> Thou, thou and all thy mates, to keep
> An incommunicable sleep.

These lines, supposed to be uttered by "a poor widow at Penrith," afford a fair illustration of what Wordsworth calls "the language really spoken by men," with "metre superadded." "What other distinction from prose," he asks, "would we have?" We may answer that we would have what he has actually given us, viz., an appropriate and attractive music, lying both in the rhythm and in the actual sound of the words used,—a music whose complexity may be indicated here by drawing out some of its elements in detail, at the risk of appearing pedantic and technical. We observe, then (*a*), that the general movement of the lines is unusually slow. They contain a very large proportion of strong accents and long vowels, to suit the tone of deep and despairing sorrow. In six places

only out of twenty-eight is the accent weak where it might be expected to be strong (in the second syllables, namely, of the Iambic foot), and in each of these cases the omission of a possible accent throws greater weight on the next succeeding accent—on the accents, that is to say, contained in the words inhuman, desert, lion, summoned, deep, and sleep. (*b*) The first four lines contain subtle alliterations of the letters d, h, m, and th. In this connexion it should be remembered that when consonants are thus repeated at the beginning of syllables, those syllables need not be at the beginning of words; and further, that repetitions scarcely more numerous than chance alone would have occasioned, may be so placed by the poet as to produce a strongly-felt effect. If any one doubts the effectiveness of the unobvious alliterations here insisted on, let him read (1) "jungle" for "desert," (2) "maybe" for "perhaps," (3) "tortured" for "mangled," (4) "blown" for "thrown," and he will become sensible of the lack of the metrical support which the existing consonants give one another. The three last lines contain one or two similar alliterations on which I need not dwell. (*c*) The words *inheritest* and *summoned* are by no means such as "a poor widow," even at Penrith, would employ; they are used to intensify the imagined relation which connects the missing man with (1) the wild beasts who surround him, and (2) the invisible Power which leads; so that something mysterious and awful is added to his fate. (*d*) This impression is heightened by the use of the word *incommunicable* in an unusual sense, "incapable of being communicated *with*," instead of "incapable of being communicated;" while (*e*) the expression "to keep an incommunicable sleep" for "to lie dead," gives dignity to the occasion by carrying the mind back along a train of

literary associations of which the well-known ἀτέρμονα νήγρετον ὕπνον of Moschus may be taken as the type.

We must not, of course, suppose that Wordsworth consciously sought these alliterations, arranged these accents, resolved to introduce an unusual word in the last line, or hunted for a classical allusion. But what the poet's brain does not do consciously it does unconsciously; a selective action is going on in its recesses simultaneously with the overt train of thought, and on the degree of this unconscious suggestiveness the richness and melody of the poetry will depend.

No rules can secure the attainment of these effects; and the very same artifices which are delightful when used by one man seem mechanical and offensive when used by another. Nor is it by any means always the case that the man who can most delicately appreciate the melody of the poetry of others will be able to produce similar melody himself. Nay, even if he can produce it one year it by no means follows that he will be able to produce it the next. Of all qualifications for writing poetry this inventive music is the most arbitrarily distributed, and the most evanescent. But it is the more important to dwell on its necessity, inasmuch as both good and bad poets are tempted to ignore it. The good poet prefers to ascribe his success to higher qualities; to his imagination, elevation of thought, descriptive faculty. The bad poet can more easily urge that his thoughts are too advanced for mankind to appreciate than that his melody is too sweet for their ears to catch. And when the gift vanishes no poet is willing to confess that it is gone; so humiliating is it to lose power over mankind by the loss of something which seems quite independent of intellect or character. And yet so it is. For some twenty years at most (1798-

1818), Wordsworth possessed this gift of melody. During those years he wrote works which profoundly influenced mankind. The gift then left him; he continued as wise and as earnest as ever, but his poems had no longer any potency, nor his existence much public importance.

Humiliating as such reflections may seem, they are in accordance with actual experience in all branches of art. The fact is that the pleasures which art gives us are complex in the extreme. We are always disposed to dwell on such of their elements as are explicable and can in some way be traced to moral or intellectual sources. But they contain also other elements which are inexplicable, non-moral, and non intellectual, and which render most of our attempted explanations of artistic merit so incomplete as to be practically misleading. Among such incomplete explanations Wordsworth's essays must certainly be ranked. It would not be safe for any man to believe that he had produced true poetry because he had fulfilled the conditions which Wordsworth lays down. But the essays effected what is perhaps as much as the writer on art can fairly hope to accomplish. They placed in a striking light that side of the subject which had been too long ignored; they aided in recalling an art which had become conventional and fantastic into the normal current of English thought and speech.

It may be added that both in doctrine and practice Wordsworth exhibits a progressive reaction from the extreme views with which he starts towards that common vein of good sense and sound judgment which may be traced back to Horace, Longinus, and Aristotle. His first preface is violently polemic. He attacks with reason that conception of the sublime and beautiful which is represented by Dryden's picture of "Cortes alone in his night-

gown," remarking that "the mountains seem to nod their drowsy heads." But the only example of true poetry which he sees fit to adduce in contrast consists in a stanza from the *Babes in the Wood*. In his preface of 1815 he is not less severe on false sentiment and false observation. But his views of the complexity and dignity of poetry have been much developed, and he is willing now to draw his favourable instances from Shakespeare, Milton, Virgil, and himself.

His own practice underwent a corresponding change. It is only to a few poems of his earlier years that the famous parody of the *Rejected Addresses* fairly applies.

> My father's walls are made of brick,
> But not so tall and not so thick
> As these; and goodness me!
> My father's beams are made of wood,
> But never, never half so good
> As those that now I see!

Lines something like these might have occurred in *The Thorn* or *The Idiot Boy*. Nothing could be more different from the style of the sonnets, or of the *Ode to Duty*, or of *Laodamia*. And yet both the simplicity of the earlier and the pomp of the later poems were almost always noble; nor is the transition from the one style to the other a perplexing or abnormal thing. For all sincere styles are congruous to one another, whether they be adorned or no, as all high natures are congruous to one another, whether in the garb of peasant or of prince. What is incongruous to both is affectation, vulgarity, egoism; and while the noble style can be interchangeably childlike or magnificent, as its theme requires, the ignoble can neither simplify itself into purity nor deck itself into grandeur.

It need not, therefore, surprise us to find the classical models becoming more and more dominant in Wordsworth's mind, till the poet of *Poor Susan* and *The Cuckoo* spends months over the attempt to translate the *Æneid*,—to win the secret of that style which he placed at the head of all poetic styles, and of those verses which "wind," as he says, "with the majesty of the Conscript Fathers entering the Senate-house in solemn procession," and envelope in their imperial melancholy all the sorrows and the fates of man.

And, indeed, so tranquil and uniform was the life which we are now retracing, and at the same time so receptive of any noble influence which opportunity might bring, that a real epoch is marked in Wordsworth's poetical career by the mere re-reading of some Latin authors in 1814-16 with a view to preparing his eldest son for the University. Among the poets whom he thus studied was one in whom he might seem to discern his own spirit endowed with grander proportions, and meditating on sadder fates. Among the poets of the battlefield, of the study, of the boudoir, he encountered the first Priest of Nature, the first poet in Europe who had deliberately shunned the life of courts and cities for the mere joy in Nature's presence, for "sweet Parthenope and the fields beside Vesevus' hill."

There are, indeed, passages in the *Georgics* so Wordsworthian, as we now call it, in tone, that it is hard to realize what centuries separated them from the *Sonnet to Lady Beaumont* or from *Ruth*. Such, for instance, is the picture of the Corycian old man, who had made himself independent of the seasons by his gardening skill, so that "when gloomy winter was still rending the stones with frost, still curbing with ice the rivers' onward flow, he

even then was plucking the soft hyacinth's bloom, and chid the tardy summer and delaying airs of spring." Such, again, is the passage where the poet breaks from the glories of successful industry into the delight of watching the great processes which nature accomplishes untutored and alone, "the joy of gazing on Cytorus waving with boxwood, and on forests of Narycian pine, on tracts that never felt the harrow, nor knew the care of man."

Such thoughts as these the Roman and the English poet had in common;—the heritage of untarnished souls.

> I asked; 'twas whispered; The device
> To each and all might well belong:
> It is the Spirit of Paradise
> That prompts such work, a Spirit strong,
> That gives to all the self-same bent
> Where life is wise and innocent.

It is not only in tenderness but in dignity that the "wise and innocent" are wont to be at one. Strong in tranquillity, they can intervene amid great emotions with a master's voice, and project on the storm of passion the clear light of their unchanging calm. And thus it was that the study of Virgil, and especially of Virgil's solemn picture of the Underworld, prompted in Wordsworth's mind the most majestic of his poems, his one great utterance on heroic love.

He had as yet written little on any such topic as this. At Goslar he had composed the poems on *Lucy* to which allusion has already been made. And after his happy marriage he had painted in one of the best known of his poems the sweet transitions of wedded love, as it moves on from the first shock and agitation of the encounter of predestined souls through all tendernesses of intimate affection into a pervading permanency and calm.

Scattered, moreover, throughout his poems are several passages in which the passion is treated with similar force and truth. The poem which begins "'Tis said that some have died for love" depicts the enduring poignancy of bereavement with an "iron pathos" that is almost too strong for art. And something of the same power of clinging attachment is shown in the sonnet where the poet is stung with the thought that "even for the least division of an hour" he has taken pleasure in the life around him, without the accustomed tacit reference to one who has passed away. There is a brighter touch of constancy in that other sonnet where, after letting his fancy play over a glad imaginary past, he turns to his wife, ashamed that even in so vague a vision he could have shaped for himself a solitary joy.

> Let *her* be comprehended in the frame
> Of these illusions, or they please no more.

In later years the two sonnets on his wife's picture set on that love the consecration of faithful age; and there are those who can recall his look as he gazed on the picture and tried to recognize in that aged face the Beloved who to him was ever young and fair,—a look as of one dwelling in life-long affections with the unquestioning single-heartedness of a child.

And here it might have been thought that as his experience ended his power of description would have ended too. But it was not so. Under the powerful stimulus of the sixth *Æneid*—allusions to which pervade *Laodamia*[2]

[2] *Laodamia* should be read (as it is given in Mr. Matthew Arnold's admirable volume of selections) with the *earlier* conclusion: the *second* form is less satisfactory, and the *third*, with its sermonizing tone, "thus all in vain exhorted and reproved," is worst of all.

throughout—with unusual labour, and by a strenuous effort of the imagination, Wordsworth was enabled to depict his own love *in excelsis*, to imagine what aspect it might have worn, if it had been its destiny to deny itself at some heroic call, and to confront with nobleness an extreme emergency, and to be victor (as Plato has it) in an Olympian contest of the soul. For, indeed, the "fervent, not ungovernable, love," which is the ideal that Protesilaus is sent to teach, is on a great scale the same affection which we have been considering in domesticity and peace; it is love considered not as a revolution but as a consummation; as a self-abandonment not to a laxer but to a sterner law; no longer as an invasive passion, but as the deliberate habit of the soul. It is that conception of love which springs into being in the last canto of Dante's *Purgatory*,—which finds in English chivalry a noble voice,—

> I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not honour more.

For, indeed, (even as Plato says that Beauty is the splendour of Truth,) so such a Love as this is the splendour of Virtue; it is the unexpected spark that flashes from self-forgetful soul to soul, it is man's standing evidence that he "must lose himself to find himself," and that only when the veil of his personality has lifted from around him can he recognize that he is already in heaven.

In a second poem inspired by this revived study of classical antiquity Wordsworth has traced the career of Dion,—the worthy pupil of Plato, the philosophic ruler of Syracuse, who allowed himself to shed blood unjustly, though for the public good, and was haunted by a spectre symbolical of this fatal error. At last Dion was assassi-

nated, and the words in which the poet tells his fate seem to me to breathe the very triumph of philosophy, to paint with a touch the greatness of a spirit which makes of Death himself a deliverer, and has its strength in the unseen.

> So were the hopeless troubles, that involved
> The soul of Dion, instantly dissolved.

I can only compare these lines to that famous passage of Sophocles where the lamentations of the dying Œdipus are interrupted by the impatient summons of an unseen accompanying god. In both places the effect is the same; to present to us with striking brevity the contrast between the visible and the invisible presences that may stand about a man's last hour; for he may feel with the desolate Œdipus that "all I am has perished"—he may sink like Dion through inextricable sadness to a disastrous death, and then in a moment the transitory shall disappear and the essential shall be made plain, and from Dion's upright spirit the perplexities shall vanish away, and Œdipus, in the welcome of that unknown companionship, shall find his expiations over and his reward begun.

It is true, no doubt, that when Wordsworth wrote these poems he had lost something of the young inimitable charm which fills such pieces as the *Fountain* or the *Solitary Reaper*. His language is majestic, but it is no longer magical. And yet we cannot but feel that he has put into these poems something which he could not have put into the poems which preceded them; that they bear the impress of a soul which has added moral effort to poetic inspiration, and is mistress now of the acquired as well as of the innate virtue. For it is words like these that are the strength and stay of men; nor can their

accent of lofty earnestness be simulated by the writer's art. Literary skill may deceive the reader who seeks a literary pleasure alone; and he to whom these strong consolations are a mere imaginative luxury may be uncertain or indifferent out of what heart they come. But those who need them know; spirits that hunger after righteousness discern their proper food; there is no fear lest they confound the sentimental and superficial with those weighty utterances of moral truth which are the most precious legacy that a man can leave to mankind.

Thus far, then, I must hold that although much of grace had already vanished there was on the whole a progress and elevation in the mind of him of whom we treat. But the culminating point is here. After this—whatever ripening process may have been at work unseen—what is chiefly visible is the slow stiffening of the imaginative power, the slow withdrawal of the insight into the soul of things, and a descent—ἁβληχρὸς μάλα τοῖος—"soft as soft can be," to the euthanasy of a death that was like sleep.

The impression produced by Wordsworth's reperusal of Virgil in 1814-16 was a deep and lasting one. In 1829-30 he devoted much time and labour to a translation of the first three books of the *Æneid*, and it is interesting to note the gradual modification of his views as to the true method of rendering poetry.

"I have long been persuaded," he writes to Lord Lonsdale in 1829, "that Milton formed his blank verse upon the model of the *Georgics* and the *Æneid*, and I am so much struck with this resemblance, that I should have attempted Virgil in blank verse, had I not been persuaded that no ancient author can with advantage be so rendered. Their religion, their warfare, their course of action and

feeling, are too remote from modern interest to allow it. We require every possible help and attraction of sound in our language to smooth the way for the admission of things so remote from our present concerns. My own notion of translation is, that it cannot be too literal, provided these faults be avoided: *baldness*, in which I include all that takes from dignity; and strangeness, or uncouthness, including harshness; and lastly, attempts to convey meanings which, as they cannot be given but by languid circumlocutions, cannot in fact be said to be given at all. . . . I feel it, however, to be too probable that my translation is deficient in ornament, because I must unavoidably have lost many of Virgil's, and have never without reluctance attempted a compensation of my own."

The truth of this last self-criticism is very apparent from the fragments of the translation which were published in the *Philological Museum;* and Coleridge, to whom the whole manuscript was submitted, justly complains of finding "page after page without a single brilliant note;" and adds, "Finally, my conviction is that you undertake an impossibility, and that there is no medium between a pure version and one on the avowed principle of *compensation* in the widest sense, i. e. manner, genius, total effect; I confine myself to *Virgil* when I say this." And it appears that Wordsworth himself came round to this view, for in reluctantly sending a specimen of his work to the *Philological Museum* in 1832, he says,—

"Having been displeased in modern translations with the additions of incongruous matter, I began to translate with a resolve to keep clear of that fault by adding nothing; but I became convinced that a spirited translation can scarcely be accomplished in the English language without admitting a principle of compensation."

There is a curious analogy between the experiences of Cowper and Wordsworth in the way of translation. Wordsworth's translation of Virgil was prompted by the same kind of reaction against the reckless laxity of Dryden as that which inspired Cowper against the distorting artificiality of Pope. In each case the new translator cared more for his author and took a much higher view of a translator's duty than his predecessor had done. But in each case the plain and accurate translation was a failure, while the loose and ornate one continued to be admired. We need not conclude from this that the wilful inaccuracy of Pope or Dryden would be any longer excusable in such a work. But on the other hand we may certainly feel that nothing is gained by rendering an ancient poet into verse at all unless that verse be of a quality to give a pleasure independent of the faithfulness of the translation which it conveys.

The translations and *Laodamia* are not the only indications of the influence which Virgil exercised over Wordsworth. Whether from mere similarity of feeling, or from more or less conscious recollection, there are frequent passages in the English which recall the Roman poet. Who can hear Wordsworth describe how a poet on the island in Grasmere

> At noon
> Spreads out his limbs, while, yet unshorn, the sheep,
> Panting beneath the burthen of their wool
> Lie round him, even as if they were a part
> Of his own household :—

and not think of the stately tenderness of Virgil's

> Stant et oves circum ; nostri nec pœnitet illas—

and the flocks of Arcady that gather round in sympathy with the lovelorn Gallus' woe?

So again the well-known lines—

> Not seldom, clad in radiant vest,
> Deceitfully goes forth the Morn;
> Not seldom Evening in the west
> Sinks smilingly forsworn,—

are almost a translation of Palinurus' remonstrance with "the treachery of tranquil heaven." And when the poet wishes for any link which could bind him closer to the Highland maiden who has flitted across his path as a being of a different world from his own:—

> Thine elder Brother would I be,
> Thy Father, anything to thee!—

we hear the echo of the sadder plaint—

> Atque utinam e vobis unus—

when the Roman statesman longs to be made one with the simple life of shepherd or husbandman, and to know their undistracted joy.

Still more impressive is the shock of surprise with which we read in Wordsworth's poem on Ossian the following lines:—

> Musæus, stationed with his lyre
> Supreme among the Elysian quire,
> Is, for the dwellers upon earth,
> Mute as a lark ere morning's birth,

and perceive that he who wrote them has entered—where no commentator could conduct him—into the solemn pathos of Virgil's *Musaeum ante omnis*—; where the singer whose very existence upon earth has become a legend and a mythic name is seen keeping in the underworld his old pre-eminence, and towering above the blessed dead.

This is a stage in Wordsworth's career on which his biographer is tempted unduly to linger. For we have reached the Indian summer of his genius; it can still shine at moments bright as ever, and with even a new majesty and calm; but we feel, nevertheless, that the melody is dying from his song; that he is hardening into self-repetition, into rhetoric, into sermonizing common-place, and is rigid where he was once profound. The *Thanksgiving Ode* (1816) strikes death to the heart. The accustomed patriotic sentiments—the accustomed virtuous aspirations—these are still there; but the accent is like that of a ghost who calls to us in hollow mimicry of a voice that once we loved.

And yet Wordsworth's poetic life was not to close without a great symbolical spectacle, a solemn farewell. Sunset among the Cumbrian hills, often of remarkable beauty, once or twice, perhaps, in a score of years, reaches a pitch of illusion and magnificence which indeed seems nothing less than the commingling of earth and heaven. Such a sight—seen from Rydal Mount in 1818—afforded once more the needed stimulus, and evoked that "*Evening Ode, composed on an evening of extraordinary splendour and beauty,*" which is the last considerable production of Wordsworth's genius. In this ode we recognize the peculiar gift of reproducing with magical simplicity as it were the inmost virtue of natural phenomena.

> No sound is uttered, but a deep
> And solemn harmony pervades
> The hollow vale from steep to steep,
> And penetrates the glades.
> Far distant images draw nigh,
> Called forth by wondrous potency
> Of beamy radiance, that imbues
> Whate'er it strikes, with gem-like hues!

In vision exquisitely clear
Herds range along the mountain side;
And glistening antlers are descried,
And gilded flocks appear.

Once more the poet brings home to us that sense of belonging at once to two worlds, which gives to human life so much of mysterious solemnity.

Wings at my shoulder seem to play;
But, rooted here, I stand and gaze
On those bright steps that heavenward raise
Their practicable way.

And the poem ends—with a deep personal pathos—in an allusion, repeated from the *Ode on Immortality*, to the light which "lay about him in his infancy,"—the light

Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
Which at this moment, on my waking sight
Appears to shine, by miracle restored!
My soul, though yet confined to earth,
Rejoices in a second birth;
—'Tis past, the visionary splendour fades;
And night approaches with her shades.

For those to whom the mission of Wordsworth appears before all things as a religious one there is something solemn in the spectacle of the seer standing at the close of his own apocalypse, with the consciousness that the stiffening brain would never permit him to drink again that overflowing sense of glory and revelation; never, till he should drink it new in the kingdom of God. He lived, in fact, through another generation of men, but the vision came to him no more.

Or if some vestige of those gleams
Survived, 'twas only in his dreams.

We look on a man's life for the most part as forming in itself a completed drama. We love to see the interest maintained to the close, the pathos deepened at the departing hour. To die on the same day is the prayer of lovers, to vanish at Trafalgar is the ideal of heroic souls. And yet—so wide and various are the issues of life—there is a solemnity as profound in a quite different lot. For if we are moving among eternal emotions we should have time to bear witness that they are eternal. Even Love left desolate may feel with a proud triumph that it could never have rooted itself so immutably amid the joys of a visible return as it can do through the constancies of bereavement, and the lifelong memory which is a lifelong hope. And Vision, Revelation, Ecstasy,—it is not only while these are kindling our way that we should speak of them to men, but rather when they have passed from us and left us only their record in our souls, whose permanence confirms the fiery finger which wrote it long ago. For as the Greeks would end the first drama of a trilogy with a hush of concentration, and with declining notes of calm, so to us the narrowing receptivity and persistent steadfastness of age suggest not only decay but expectancy, and not death so much as sleep; or seem, as it were, the beginning of operations which are not measured by our hurrying time, nor tested by any achievement to be accomplished here.

CHAPTER X.

NATURAL RELIGION.

It will have been obvious from the preceding pages, as well as from the tone of other criticisms on Wordsworth, that his exponents are not content to treat his poems on Nature simply as graceful descriptive pieces, but speak of him in terms usually reserved for the originators of some great religious movement. "The very image of Wordsworth," says De Quincey, for instance, "as I prefigured it to my own planet-struck eye, crushed my faculties as before Elijah or St. Paul." How was it that poems so simple in outward form that the reviewers of the day classed them with the *Song of Sixpence*, or at best with the *Babes in the Wood*, could affect a critic like De Quincey,—I do not say with admiration, but with this exceptional sense of revelation and awe?

The explanation of this anomaly lies, as is well known, in something new and individual in the way in which Wordsworth regarded Nature; something more or less discernible in most of his works, and redeeming even some of the slightest of them from insignificance, while conferring on the more serious and sustained pieces an importance of a different order from that which attaches to even the most brilliant productions of his contemporaries. To define with exactness, however, what was this new

element imported by our poet into man's view of Nature is far from easy, and requires some brief consideration of the attitude in this respect of his predecessors.

There is so much in the external world which is terrible or unfriendly to man, that the first impression made on him by Nature as a whole, even in temperate climates, is usually that of awfulness; his admiration being reserved for the fragments of her which he has utilized for his own purposes, or adorned with his own handiwork. When Homer tells us of a place

> Where even a god might gaze, and stand apart,
> And feel a wondering rapture at the heart,

it is of no prospect of sea or mountain that he is speaking, but of a garden where everything is planted in rows, and there is a never-ending succession of pears and figs. These gentler aspects of Nature will have their minor deities to represent them; but the men, of whatever race they be, whose minds are most absorbed in the problems of man's position and destiny will tend for the most part to some sterner and more overwhelming conception of the sum of things. "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" is the cry of Hebrew piety as well as of modern science; and the "majestas cognita rerum,"—the recognized majesty of the universe—teaches Lucretius only the indifference of gods and the misery of men.

But in a well-known passage, in which Lucretius is honoured as he deserves, we find nevertheless a different view hinted, with an impressiveness which it had hardly acquired till then. We find Virgil implying that scientific knowledge of Nature may not be the only way of arriving at the truth about her; that her loveliness is also a revelation, and that the soul which is in unison with

her is justified by its own peace. This is the very substance of *The Poet's Epitaph* also; of the poem in which Wordsworth at the beginning of his career describes himself as he continued till its close,—the poet who "murmurs near the running brooks a music sweeter than their own,"—who scorns the man of science "who would peep and botanize upon his mother's grave."

> The outward shows of sky and earth,
> Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
> And impulses of deeper birth
> Have come to him in solitude.
>
> In common things that round us lie
> Some random truths he can impart,—
> The harvest of a quiet eye
> That broods and sleeps on his own heart.
>
> But he is weak, both man and boy,
> Hath been an idler in the land;
> Contented if he might enjoy
> The things which others understand.

Like much else in the literature of imperial Rome, the passage in the second *Georgic* to which I have referred is in its essence more modern than the Middle Ages. Mediæval Christianity involved a divorce from the nature around us, as well as from the nature within. With the rise of the modern spirit delight in the external world returns; and from Chaucer downwards through the whole course of English poetry are scattered indications of a mood which draws from visible things an intuition of things not seen. When Wither, in words which Wordsworth has fondly quoted, says of his muse,—

> By the murmur of a spring,
> Or the least bough's rustelling;

By a daisy whose leaves spread,
Shut when Titan goes to bed;
Or a shady bush or tree,—
She could more infuse in me
Than all Nature's beauties can
In some other wiser man,—

he felt already, as Wordsworth after him, that Nature is no mere collection of phenomena, but infuses into her least approaches some sense of her mysterious whole.

Passages like this, however, must not be too closely pressed. The mystic element in English literature has run for the most part into other channels; and when, after Pope's reign of artificiality and convention, attention was redirected to the phenomena of Nature by Collins, Beattie, Thomson, Crabbe, Cowper, Burns, and Scott, it was in a spirit of admiring observation rather than of an intimate worship. Sometimes, as for the most part in Thomson, we have mere picturesqueness,—a reproduction of Nature for the mere pleasure of reproducing her,—a kind of stock-taking of her habitual effects. Or sometimes, as in Burns, we have a glowing spirit which looks on Nature with a side glance, and uses her as an accessory to the expression of human love and woe. Cowper sometimes contemplated her as a whole, but only as affording a proof of the wisdom and goodness of a personal Creator.

To express what is characteristic in Wordsworth we must recur to a more generalized conception of the relations between the natural and the spiritual worlds. We must say with Plato—the lawgiver of all subsequent idealists—that the unknown realities around us, which the philosopher apprehends by the contemplation of abstract truth, become in various ways obscurely perceptible to men under the influence of "divine mad-

ness,"—of an enthusiasm which is in fact inspiration. And further, giving, as he so often does, a half-fanciful expression to a substance of deep meaning,—Plato distinguishes four kinds of this enthusiasm. There is the prophet's glow of revelation; and the prevailing prayer which averts the wrath of heaven; and that philosophy which enters, so to say, unawares into the poet through his art, and into the lover through his love. Each of these stimuli may so exalt the inward faculties as to make a man ἔνθεος καὶ ἔκφρων,—"bereft of reason but filled with divinity,"—percipient of an intelligence other and larger than his own. To this list Wordsworth has made an important addition. He has shown by his example and writings that the contemplation of Nature may become a stimulus as inspiring as these; may enable us "to see into the life of things"—as far, perhaps, as beatific vision or prophetic rapture can attain. Assertions so impalpable as these must justify themselves by subjective evidence. He who claims to give a message must satisfy us that he has himself received it; and, inasmuch as transcendent things are in themselves inexpressible, he must convey to us in hints and figures the conviction which we need. Prayer may bring the spiritual world near to us; but when the eyes of the kneeling Dominic seem to say "*Io son venuto a questo,*" their look must persuade us that the life of worship has indeed attained the reward of vision. Art, too, may be inspired; but the artist, in whatever field he works, must have "such a mastery of his mystery" that the fabric of his imagination stands visible in its own light before our eyes,—

> Seeing it is built
> Of music; therefore never built at all,
> And, therefore, built for ever.

Love may open heaven; but when the lover would invite us "thither, where are the eyes of Beatrice," he must make us feel that his individual passion is indeed part and parcel of that love "which moves the sun and the other stars."

And so also with Wordsworth. Unless the words which describe the intense and sympathetic gaze with which he contemplates Nature convince us of the reality of "the light which never was on sea or land,"—of the "Presence which disturbs him with the joy of elevated thoughts,"—of the authentic vision of those hours

> When the light of sense
> Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
> The invisible world;—

unless his tone awakes a responsive conviction in ourselves, there is no argument by which he can prove to us that he is offering a new insight to mankind. Yet, on the other hand, it need not be unreasonable to see in his message something more than a mere individual fancy. It seems, at least, to be closely correlated with those other messages of which we have spoken,—those other cases where some original element of our nature is capable of being regarded as an inlet of mystic truth. For in each of these complex aspects of religion we see, perhaps, the modification of a primeval instinct. There is a point of view from which Revelation seems to be but transfigured Sorcery, and Love transfigured Appetite, and Philosophy man's ordered Wonder, and Prayer his softening Fear. And similarly in the natural religion of Wordsworth we may discern the modified outcome of other human impulses hardly less universal—of those instincts which led our forefathers to people earth and air

with deities, or to vivify the whole universe with a single soul. In this view the achievement of Wordsworth was of a kind which most of the moral leaders of the race have in some way or other performed. It was that he turned a theology back again into a religion; that he revived in a higher and purer form those primitive elements of reverence for Nature's powers which had diffused themselves into speculation, or crystallized into mythology; that for a system of beliefs about Nature, which paganism had allowed to become grotesque,—of rites which had become unmeaning,—he substituted an admiration for Nature so constant, an understanding of her so subtle, a sympathy so profound, that they became a veritable worship. Such worship, I repeat, is not what we commonly imply either by paganism or by pantheism. For in pagan countries, though the gods may have originally represented natural forces, yet the conception of them soon becomes anthropomorphic, and they are reverenced as transcendent *men;* and, on the other hand, pantheism is generally characterized by an indifference to things in the concrete, to Nature in detail; so that the Whole, or Universe, with which the Stoics (for instance) sought to be in harmony, was approached not by contemplating external objects, but rather by ignoring them.

Yet here I would be understood to speak only in the most general manner. So congruous in all ages are the aspirations and the hopes of men that it would be rash indeed to attempt to assign the moment when any spiritual truth rises for the first time on human consciousness. But thus much, I think, may be fairly said, that the maxims of Wordsworth's form of natural religion were uttered before Wordsworth only in the sense in which the maxims of Christianity were uttered before

Christ. To compare small things with great—or rather, to compare great things with things vastly greater—the essential spirit of the *Lines near Tintern Abbey* was for practical purposes as new to mankind as the essential spirit of the *Sermon on the Mount*. Not the isolated expression of moral ideas, but their fusion into a whole in one memorable personality, is that which connects them for ever with a single name. Therefore it is that Wordsworth is venerated; because to so many men—indifferent, it may be, to literary or poetical effects, as such—he has shown by the subtle intensity of his own emotion how the contemplation of Nature can be made a revealing agency, like Love or Prayer,—an opening, if indeed there be any opening, into the transcendent world.

The prophet with such a message as this will, of course, appeal for the most part to the experience of exceptional moments—those moments when "we see into the life of things;" when the face of Nature sends to us "gleams like the flashing of a shield;"—hours such as those of the Solitary, who, gazing on the lovely distant scene,

> Would gaze till it became
> Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain
> The beauty, still more beauteous.

But the idealist, of whatever school, is seldom content to base his appeal to us upon these scattered intuitions alone. There is a whole epoch of our existence whose memories, differing, indeed, immensely in vividness and importance in the minds of different men, are yet sufficiently common to all men to form a favourite basis for philosophical argument. "The child is father of the man;" and through the recollection and observation of early childhood we may hope to trace our ancestry—in

heaven above or on the earth beneath—in its most significant manifestation.

It is to the workings of the mind of the child that the philosopher appeals who wishes to prove that knowledge is recollection, and that our recognition of geometrical truths—so prompt as to appear instinctive—depends on our having been actually familiar with them in an earlier world. The Christian mystic invokes with equal confidence his own memories of a state which seemed as yet to know no sin :—

> Happy those early days, when I
> Shined in my angel infancy !
> Before I understood this place
> Appointed for my second race,
> Or taught my soul to fancy aught
> But a white, celestial thought ;
> When yet I had not walked above
> A mile or two from my first Love,
> And looking back at that short space
> Could see a glimpse of His bright face ;
> When on some gilded cloud or flower
> My gazing soul would dwell an hour,
> And in those weaker glories spy
> Some shadows of eternity ;
> Before I taught my tongue to wound
> My conscience with a sinful sound,
> Or had the black art to dispense
> A several sin to every sense,
> But felt through all this fleshly dress
> Bright shoots of everlastingness.

And Wordsworth, whose recollections were exceptionally vivid, and whose introspection was exceptionally penetrating, has drawn from his own childish memories philosophical lessons which are hard to disentangle in a logical statement, but which will roughly admit of being classed under two heads. For firstly, he has shown an

unusual delicacy of analysis in eliciting the "firstborn affinities that fit our new existence to existing things;"—in tracing the first impact of impressions which are destined to give the mind its earliest ply, or even, in unreflecting natures, to determine the permanent modes of thought. And, secondly, from the halo of pure and vivid emotions with which our childish years are surrounded, and the close connexion of this emotion with external nature, which it glorifies and transforms, he infers that the soul has enjoyed elsewhere an existence superior to that of earth, but an existence of which external nature retains for a time the power of reminding her.

The first of these lines of thought may be illustrated by a passage in the *Prelude*, in which the boy's mind is represented as passing through precisely the train of emotion which we may imagine to be at the root of the theology of many barbarous peoples. He is rowing at night alone on Esthwaite Lake, his eyes fixed upon a ridge of crags, above which nothing is visible :—

> I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
> And as I rose upon the stroke my boat
> Went heaving through the water like a swan;—
> When, from behind that craggy steep till then
> The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
> As if with voluntary power instinct
> Upreared its head. I struck and struck again;
> And, growing still in stature, the grim shape
> Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
> For so it seemed, with purpose of its own,
> And measured motion like a living thing,
> Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
> And through the silent water stole my way
> Back to the covert of the willow-tree;
> There in her mooring-place I left my bark,
> And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
> And serious mood. But after I had seen

That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness—call it solitude,
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea, or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly thro' the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

In the controversy as to the origin of the worship of inanimate objects, or of the powers of Nature, this passage might fairly be cited as an example of the manner in which those objects, or those powers, can impress the mind with that awe which is the foundation of savage creeds, while yet they are not identified with any human intelligence, such as the spirits of ancestors or the like, nor even supposed to operate according to any human analogy.

Up to this point Wordsworth's reminiscences may seem simply to illustrate the conclusions which science reaches by other roads. But he is not content with merely recording and analyzing his childish impressions; he implies, or even asserts, that these "fancies from afar are brought"—that the child's view of the world reveals to him truths which the man with difficulty retains or recovers. This is not the usual teaching of science, yet it would be hard to assert that it is absolutely impossible. The child's instincts may well be supposed to partake in larger measure of the general instincts of the race, in smaller measure of the special instincts of his own country and century, than is the case with the man. Now the feelings and beliefs of each successive century will probably be, on the whole, superior to those of any previous century. But this is

not universally true; the teaching of each generation does not thus sum up the results of the whole past. And thus the child, to whom in a certain sense the past of humanity is present,—who is living through the whole life of the race in little, before he lives the life of his century in large,—may possibly dimly apprehend something more of truth in certain directions than is visible to the adults around him.

But, thus qualified, the intuitions of infancy might seem scarcely worth insisting on. And Wordsworth, as is well known, has followed Plato in advancing for the child a much bolder claim. The child's soul, in this view, has existed before it entered the body—has existed in a world superior to ours, but connected, by the immanence of the same pervading Spirit, with the material universe before our eyes. The child begins by feeling this material world strange to him. But he sees in it, as it were, what he has been accustomed to see; he discerns in it its kinship with the spiritual world which he dimly remembers; it is to him "an unsubstantial fairy place"—a scene at once brighter and more unreal than it will appear in his eyes when he has become acclimatized to earth. And even when this freshness of insight has passed away, it occasionally happens that sights or sounds of unusual beauty or carrying deep associations—a rainbow, a cuckoo's cry, a sunset of extraordinary splendour—will renew for a while this sense of vision and nearness to the spiritual world—a sense which never loses its reality, though with advancing years its presence grows briefer and more rare.

Such, then, in prosaic statement is the most characteristic message of Wordsworth. And it is to be noted that though Wordsworth at times presents it as a coherent theory, yet

it is not necessarily of the nature of a theory, nor need be accepted or rejected as a whole; but is rather an inlet of illumining emotion in which different minds can share in the measure of their capacities or their need. There are some to whom childhood brought no strange vision of brightness, but who can feel their communion with the Divinity in Nature growing with the growth of their souls. There are others who might be unwilling to acknowledge any spiritual or transcendent source for the elevating joy which the contemplation of Nature can give, but who feel nevertheless that to that joy Wordsworth has been their most effective guide. A striking illustration of this fact may be drawn from the passage in which John Stuart Mill, a philosopher of a very different school, has recorded the influence exercised over him by Wordsworth's poems, read in a season of dejection, when there seemed to be no real and substantive joy in life, nothing but the excitement of the struggle with the hardships and injustices of human fates.

"What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind," he says in his Autobiography, "was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings, which had no connexion with struggle or imperfection, but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence."

Words like these, proceeding from a mind so different from the poet's own, form perhaps as satisfactory a testi-

mony to the value of his work as any writer can obtain. For they imply that Wordsworth has succeeded in giving his own impress to emotions which may become common to all; that he has produced a body of thought which is felt to be both distinctive and coherent, while yet it enlarges the reader's capacities instead of making demands upon his credence. Whether there be theories, they shall pass; whether there be systems, they shall fail; the true epoch-maker in the history of the human soul is the man who educes from this bewildering universe a new and elevating joy.

I have alluded above to some of the passages, most of them familiar enough, in which Wordworth's sense of the mystic relation between the world without us and the world within—the correspondence between the seen and the unseen—is expressed in its most general terms. But it is evident that such a conviction as this, if it contain any truth, cannot be barren of consequences on any level of thought. The communion with Nature which is capable of being at times sublimed to an incommunicable ecstasy must be capable also of explaining Nature to us so far as she can be explained; there must be *axiomata media* of natural religion; there must be something in the nature of poetic truths, standing midway between mystic intuition and delicate observation.

How rich Wordsworth is in these poetic truths—how illumining is the gaze which he turns on the commonest phenomena—how subtly and variously he shows us the soul's innate perceptions or inherited memories as it were co-operating with Nature and "half creating" the voice with which she speaks—all this can be learnt by attentive study alone. Only a few scattered samples can be given here; and I will begin with one on whose significance the

poet has himself dwelt. This is the poem called *The Leech-Gatherer*, afterwards more formally named *Resolution and Independence.*

"I will explain to you," says Wordsworth, "in prose, my feelings in writing that poem. I describe myself as having been exalted to the highest pitch of delight by the joyousness and beauty of Nature; and then as depressed, even in the midst of those beautiful objects, to the lowest dejection and despair. A young poet in the midst of the happiness of Nature is described as overwhelmed by the thoughts of the miserable reverses which have befallen the happiest of all men, viz. poets. I think of this till I am so deeply impressed with it, that I consider the manner in which I am rescued from my dejection and despair almost as an interposition of Providence. A person reading the poem with feelings like mine will have been awed and controlled, expecting something spiritual or supernatural. What is brought forward? A lonely place, 'a pond, by which an old man *was*, far from all house or home:' not *stood*, nor *sat*, but *was*—the figure presented in the most naked simplicity possible. The feeling of spirituality or supernaturalness is again referred to as being strong in my mind in this passage. How came he here? thought I, or what can he be doing? I then describe him, whether ill or well is not for me to judge with perfect confidence; but this I *can* confidently affirm, that though I believe God has given me a strong imagination, I cannot conceive a figure more impressive than that of an old man like this, the survivor of a wife and ten children, travelling alone among the mountains and all lonely places, carrying with him his own fortitude, and the necessities which an unjust state of society has laid upon him. You speak of his speech as tedious. Everything

is tedious when one does not read with the feelings of the author. *The Thorn* is tedious to hundreds; and so is *The Idiot Boy* to hundreds. It is in the character of the old man to tell his story, which an impatient reader must feel tedious. But, good heavens! such a figure, in such a place; a pious, self-respecting, miserably infirm and pleased old man, telling such a tale!"

The naive earnestness of this passage suggests to us how constantly recurrent in Wordsworth's mind were the two trains of ideas which form the substance of the poem; the interaction, namely, (if so it may be termed,) of the moods of Nature with the moods of the human mind; and the dignity and interest of man as man, depicted with no complex background of social or political life, but set amid the primary affections and sorrows, and the wild aspects of the external world.

Among the pictures which Wordsworth has left us of the influence of Nature on human character, *Peter Bell* may be taken as marking one end, and the poems on *Lucy* the other end of the scale. Peter Bell lives in the face of Nature untouched alike by her terror and her charm; Lucy's whole being is moulded by Nature's self; she is responsive to sun and shadow, to silence and to sound, and melts almost into an impersonation of a Cumbrian valley's peace. Between these two extremes how many are the possible shades of feeling! In *Ruth*, for instance, the point impressed upon us is that Nature's influence is only salutary so long as she is herself, so to say, in keeping with man; that when her operations reach that degree of habitual energy and splendour at which our love for her passes into fascination and our admiration into bewilderment, then the fierce and irregular stimulus consorts no longer with the growth of a temperate virtue.

The wind, the tempest roaring high,
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a youth to whom was given
So much of earth, so much of heaven,
And such impetuous blood.

And a contrasting touch recalls the healing power of those gentle and familiar presences which came to Ruth in her stormy madness with visitations of momentary calm.

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,
Nor pastimes of the May;
They all were with her in her cell;
And a wild brook with cheerful knell
Did o'er the pebbles play.

I will give one other instance of this subtle method of dealing with the contrasts in Nature. It is from the poem entitled "*Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the Shore, commanding a beautiful Prospect.*" This seat was once the haunt of a lonely, a disappointed, an embittered man.

Stranger! these gloomy boughs
Had charms for him; and here he loved to sit,
His only visitants a straggling sheep,
The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper;
And on these barren rocks, with fern and heath
And juniper and thistle sprinkled o'er,
Fixing his downcast eye, he many an hour
A morbid pleasure nourished, tracing here
An emblem of his own unfruitful life;
And, lifting up his head, he then would gaze
On the more distant scene,—how lovely 'tis
Thou seest,—and he would gaze till it became
Far lovelier, and his heart could not sustain
The beauty, still more beauteous! Nor, that time,

When Nature had subdued him to herself,
Would he forget those beings, to whose minds,
Warm from the labours of benevolence,
The world, and human life, appeared a scene
Of kindred loveliness; then he would sigh
With mournful joy, to think that others felt
What he must never feel: and so, lost Man!
On visionary views would fancy feed
Till his eyes streamed with tears.

This is one of the passages which the lover of Wordsworth quotes, perhaps, with some apprehension; not knowing how far it carries into the hearts of others its affecting power; how vividly it calls up before them that mood of desolate loneliness when the whole vision of human love and joy hangs like a mirage in the air, and only when it seems irrecoverably distant seems also intolerably dear. But, however this particular passage may impress the reader, it is not hard to illustrate by abundant references the potent originality of Wordsworth's outlook on the external world.

There was indeed no aspect of Nature, however often depicted, in which his seeing eye could not discern some unnoted quality; there was no mood to which nature gave birth in the mind of man from which his meditation could not disengage some element which threw light on our inner being. How often has the approach of evening been described! and how mysterious is its solemnizing power! Yet it was reserved for Wordsworth in his sonnet "Hail, Twilight, sovereign of one peaceful hour," to draw out a characteristic of that grey waning light which half explains to us its sombre and pervading charm. "Day's mutable distinctions" pass away; all in the landscape that suggests our own age or our own handiwork is gone; we look on the sight seen by our remote ancestors,

and the visible present is generalized into an immeasureable past.

The sonnet on the Duddon beginning "What aspect bore the Man who roved or fled First of his tribe to this dark dell," carries back the mind along the same track, with the added thought of Nature's permanent gentleness amid the "hideous usages" of primeval man,—through all which the stream's voice was innocent, and its flow benign. "A weight of awe not easy to be borne" fell on the poet, also, as he looked on the earliest memorials which these remote ancestors have left us. The *Sonnet on a Stone Circle* which opens with these words is conceived in a strain of emotion never more needed than now,—when Abury itself owes its preservation to the munificence of a private individual,—when stone-circle or round-tower, camp or dolmen, are destroyed to save a few shillings, and occupation-roads are mended with the immemorial altars of an unknown God. "Speak, Giant-mother! tell it to the Morn!"—how strongly does the heart re-echo the solemn invocation which calls on those abiding witnesses to speak once of what they knew long ago!

The mention of these ancient worships may lead us to ask in what manner Wordsworth was affected by the Nature-deities of Greece and Rome—impersonations which have preserved through so many ages so strange a charm. And space must be found here for the characteristic sonnet in which the baseness and materialism of modern life drives him back on whatsoever of illumination and reality lay in that young ideal.

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in Nature that is ours;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The Winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea:
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Wordsworth's own imagination idealized Nature in a different way. The sonnet "Brook! whose society the poet seeks" places him among the men whose Nature-deities have not yet become anthropomorphic—men to whom "unknown modes of being" may seem more lovely as well as more awful than the life we know. He would not give to his idealized brook "human cheeks, channels for tears,—no Naiad shouldst thou be,"—

It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
With purer robes than those of flesh and blood,
And hath bestowed on thee a better good;
Unwearied joy, and life without its cares.

And in the *Sonnet on Calais Beach* the sea is regarded in the same way, with a sympathy (if I may so say) which needs no help from an imaginary impersonation, but strikes back to a sense of kinship which seems antecedent to the origin of man.

It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free;
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven is on the Sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

A comparison, made by Wordsworth himself, of his own method of observing Nature with Scott's expresses in less mystical language something of what I am endeavouring to say.

"He expatiated much to me one day," says Mr. Aubrey de Vere, "as we walked among the hills above Grasmere, on the mode in which Nature had been described by one of the most justly popular of England's modern poets—one for whom he preserved a high and affectionate respect. 'He took pains,' Wordsworth said; 'he went out with his pencil and note-book, and jotted down whatever struck him most—a river rippling over the sands, a ruined tower on a rock above it, a promontory, and a mountain-ash waving its red berries. He went home and wove the whole together into a poetical description.' After a pause, Wordsworth resumed, with a flashing eye and impassioned voice: 'But Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms! He should have left his pencil and note-book at home, fixed his eye as he walked with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Then, after several days had passed by, he should have interrogated his memory as to the scene. He would have discovered that while much of what he had admired was preserved to him, much was also most wisely obliterated; that which remained—the picture surviving in his mind—would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so in a large part by discarding much which, though in itself striking, was not characteristic. In every scene many of the most brilliant details are but accidental; a true eye for Nature does not note them, or at least does not dwell on them.'"

How many a phrase of Wordsworth's rises in the mind in illustration of this power! phrases which embody in a single picture, or a single image,—it may be the vivid wildness of the flowery coppice, of—

> Flaunting summer, when he throws
> His soul into the briar-rose,—

or the melancholy stillness of the declining year,—

> Where floats
> O'er twilight fields the autumnal gossamer;

or—as in the words which to the sensitive Charles Lamb seemed too terrible for art—the irresponsive blankness of the universe—

> The broad open eye of the solitary sky—

beneath which mortal hearts must make what merriment they may.

Or take those typical stanzas in *Peter Bell*, which so long were accounted among Wordsworth's leading absurdities.

> In vain through every changeful year
> Did Nature lead him as before;
> A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more.
>
> In vain, through water, earth, and air,
> The soul of happy sound was spread,
> When Peter, on some April morn,
> Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
> Made the warm earth his lazy bed.
>
> At noon, when by the forest's edge
> He lay beneath the branches high,
> The soft blue sky did never melt
> Into his heart,—he never felt
> The witchery of the soft blue sky!
>
> On a fair prospect some have looked
> And felt, as I have heard them say,
> As if the moving time had been
> A thing as steadfast as the scene
> On which they gazed themselves away.

In all these passages, it will be observed, the emotion is

educed from Nature rather than added to her; she is treated as a mystic text to be deciphered, rather than as a stimulus to roving imagination. This latter mood, indeed, Wordsworth feels occasionally, as in the sonnet where the woodland sights become to him "like a dream of the whole world;" but it is checked by the recurring sense that "it is our business to idealize the real, and not to realize the ideal." Absorbed in admiration of fantastic clouds of sunset, he feels for a moment ashamed to think that they are unrememberable—

> They are of the sky,
> And from our earthly memory fade away.

But soon he disclaims this regret, and reasserts the paramount interest of the things that we can grasp and love.

> Grove, isle, with every shape of sky-built dome,
> Though clad in colours beautiful and pure,
> Find in the heart of man no natural home:
> The immortal Mind craves objects that endure:
> These cleave to it; from these it cannot roam,
> Nor they from it: their fellowship is secure.

From this temper of Wordsworth's mind, it follows that there will be many moods in which we shall not retain him as our companion. Moods which are rebellious, which beat at the bars of fate; moods of passion reckless in its vehemence, and assuming the primacy of all other emotions through the intensity of its delight or pain; moods of mere imaginative phantasy, when we would fain shape from the well-worn materials of our thought some fabric at once beautiful and new; from all such phases of our inward being Wordsworth stands aloof. His poem on the nightingale and the stock-dove illustrates with half-conscious allegory the contrast between himself and certain other poets.

O Nightingale! thou surely art
A creature of a fiery heart:—
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
Thou sing'st as if the God of wine
Had helped thee to a Valentine;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent Night;
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in their peaceful groves.

I heard a Stock-dove sing or say
His homely tale, this very day;
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to be come at by the breeze:
He did not cease; but cooed—and cooed,
And somewhat pensively he wooed.
He sang of love with quiet blending,
Slow to begin, and never ending;
Of serious faith and inward glee;
That was the Song—the Song for me!

"*His voice was buried among trees,*" says Wordsworth; "a metaphor expressing the love of *seclusion* by which this bird is marked; and characterizing its note as not partaking of the shrill and the piercing, and therefore more easily deadened by the intervening shade; yet a note so peculiar, and withal so pleasing, that the breeze, gifted with that love of the sound which the poet feels, penetrates the shade in which it is entombed, and conveys it to the ear of the listener."

Wordsworth's poetry on the emotional side (as distinguished from its mystical or its patriotic aspects) could hardly be more exactly described than in the above sentence. For while there are few poems of his which could be read to a mixed audience with the certainty of producing an immediate impression; yet on the other hand all the best ones gain in an unusual degree by

repeated study; and this is especially the case with those in which some touch of tenderness is enshrined in a scene of beauty, which it seems to interpret while it is itself exalted by it. Such a poem is *Stepping Westward*, where the sense of sudden fellowship, and the quaint greeting beneath the glowing sky, seem to link man's momentary wanderings with the cosmic spectacles of heaven. Such are the lines where all the wild romance of Highland scenery, the forlornness of the solitary vales, pours itself through the lips of the maiden singing at her work, "as if her song could have no ending,"—

> Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
> And sings a melancholy strain;
> O listen! for the Vale profound
> Is overflowing with the sound.

Such—and with how subtle a difference!—is the *Fragment* in which a "Spirit of noonday" wears on his face the silent joy of Nature in her own recesses, undisturbed by beast, or bird, or man,—

> Nor ever was a cloudless sky
> So steady or so fair.

And such are the poems—*We are Seven*, *The Pet Lamb*,[1]

[1] The *Pet Lamb* is probably the only poem of Wordsworth's which can be charged with having done moral injury, and that to a single individual alone. "Barbara Lewthwaite," says Wordsworth, in 1843, "was not, in fact, the child whom I had seen and overheard as engaged in the poem. I chose the name for reasons implied in the above," (i. e. an account of her remarkable beauty), "and will here add a caution against the use of names of living persons. Within a few months after the publication of this poem I was much surprised, and more hurt, to find it in a child's school-book, which, having been compiled by Lindley Murray, had come into use at Grasmere School, where Barbara was a

Louisa, The Two April Mornings—in which the beauty of rustic children melts, as it were, into Nature herself, and the—

> Blooming girl whose hair was wet
> With points of morning dew

becomes the impersonation of the season's early joy. We may apply, indeed, to all these girls Wordsworth's description of leverets playing on a lawn, and call them—

> Separate creatures in their several gifts
> Abounding, but so fashioned that in all
> That Nature prompts them to display, their looks,
> Their starts of motion and their fits of rest,
> An undistinguishable style appears
> And character of gladness, as if Spring
> Lodged in their innocent bosoms, and the spirit
> Of the rejoicing Morning were their own.

My limits forbid me to dwell longer on these points. The passages which I have been citing have been for the most part selected as illustrating the novelty and subtlety of Wordsworth's view of Nature. But it will now be sufficiently clear how continually a strain of human interest is interwoven with the delight derived from impersonal things.

> Long have I loved what I behold,
> The night that calms, the day that cheers:
> The common growth of mother earth
> Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
> Her humblest mirth and tears.

The poet of the *Waggoner*—who, himself a habitual

pupil. And, alas, I had the mortification of hearing that she was very vain of being thus distinguished; and in after-life she used to say that she remembered the incident, and what I said to her upon the occasion."

water-drinker, has so glowingly described the glorification which the prospect of nature receives in a half-intoxicated brain—may justly claim that he can enter into all genuine pleasures, even of an order which he declines for himself. With anything that is false or artificial he cannot sympathize, nor with such faults as baseness, cruelty, rancour, which seem contrary to human nature itself; but in dealing with faults of mere *weakness* he is far less strait-laced than many less virtuous men.

He had, in fact, a reverence for human beings as such which enabled him to face even their frailties without alienation; and there was something in his own happy exemption from such falls which touched him into regarding men less fortunate rather with pity than disdain.

> Because the unstained, the clear, the crystalline,
> Have ever in them something of benign.

His comment on Burns's *Tam o' Shanter* will perhaps surprise some readers who are accustomed to think of him only in his didactic attitude.

"It is the privilege of poetic genius, he says, to catch, under certain restrictions of which perhaps at the time of its being exerted it is but dimly conscious, a spirit of pleasure wherever it can be found, in the walks of nature, and in the business of men. The poet, trusting to primary instincts, luxuriates among the felicities of love and wine, and is enraptured while he describes the fairer aspects of war, nor does he shrink from the company of the passion of love though immoderate—from convivial pleasures though intemperate—nor from the presence of war, though savage, and recognized as the handmaid of desolation. Frequently and admirably has Burns given way to these impulses of nature, both with reference to himself and in describing the condition of others. Who, but some impene-

trable dunce or narrow-minded puritan in works of art, ever read without delight the picture which he has drawn of the convivial exaltation of the rustic adventurer Tam o' Shanter? The poet fears not to tell the reader in the outset that his hero was a desperate and sottish drunkard, whose excesses were as frequent as his opportunities. This reprobate sits down to his cups while the storm is roaring, and heaven and earth are in confusion; the night is driven on by song and tumultuous noise, laughter and jest thicken as the beverage improves upon the palate—conjugal fidelity archly bends to the service of general benevolence—selfishness is not absent, but wearing the mask of social cordiality; and while these various elements of humanity are blended into one proud and happy composition of elated spirits, the anger of the tempest without doors only heightens and sets off the enjoyment within. I pity him who cannot perceive that in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect.

> Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
> O'er a' the *ills* of life victorious.

What a lesson do these words convey of charitable indulgence for the vicious habits of the principal actor in the scene, and of those who resemble him! Men who to the rigidly virtuous are objects almost of loathing, and whom therefore they cannot serve! The poet, penetrating the unsightly and disgusting surfaces of things, has unveiled with exquisite skill the finer ties of imagination and feeling, that often bind these beings to practices productive of so much unhappiness to themselves, and to those whom it is their duty to cherish; and, as far as he puts the reader into possession of this intelligent sympathy, he qualifies him for exercising a salutary influence over the minds of those who are thus deplorably enslaved."

The reverence for man as man, the sympathy for him in his primary relations and his essential being, of which these comments on *Tam o' Shanter* form so remarkable an example, is a habit of thought too ingrained in all Wordsworth's works to call for specific illustration. The

figures of *Michael*, of *Matthew*, of the *Brothers*, of the hero of the *Excursion*, and even of the *Idiot Boy*, suggest themselves at once in this connexion. But it should be noted in each case how free is the poet's view from any idealization of the poorer classes as such, from the ascription of imaginary merits to an unknown populace which forms the staple of so much revolutionary eloquence. These poems, while they form the most convincing rebuke to the exclusive pride of the rich and great, are also a stern and strenuous incentive to the obscure and lowly. They are pictures of the poor man's life as it is,—pictures as free as Crabbe's from the illusion of sentiment,—but in which the delight of mere observation (which in Crabbe predominates) is subordinated to an intense sympathy with all such capacities of nobleness and tenderness as are called out by the stress and pressure of penury or woe. They form for the folk of northern England (as the works of Burns and Scott for the Scottish folk) a gallery of figures that are modelled, as it were, both from without and from within; by one with experience so personal as to keep every sentence vividly accurate, and yet with an insight which could draw from that simple life lessons to itself unknown. We may almost venture to generalize our statement further, and to assert that no writer since Shakespeare has left us so true a picture of the British nation. In Milton, indeed, we have the characteristic English spirit at a whiter glow; but it is the spirit of the scholar only, or of the ruler, not of the peasant, the woman, or the child. Wordsworth gives us that spirit as it is diffused among shepherds and husbandmen,—as it exists in obscurity and at peace And they who know what makes the strength of nations need wish nothing better than that the temper which he saw and

honoured among the Cumbrian dales should be the temper of all England, now and for ever.

Our discussion of Wordsworth's form of Natural Religion has led us back by no forced transition to the simple life which he described and shared. I return to the story of his later years,—if that be called a story which derives no interest from incident or passion, and dwells only on the slow broodings of a meditative soul.

CHAPTER XI.

ITALIAN TOUR—ECCLESIASTICAL SONNETS—POLITICAL VIEWS—LAUREATESHIP.

WORDSWORTH was fond of travelling, and indulged this taste whenever he could afford it. Comparing himself and Southey, he says in 1843: "My lamented friend Southey used to say that had he been a Papist, the course of life which in all probability would have been his was that of a Benedictine monk, in a convent furnished with an inexhaustible library. *Books* were, in fact, his passion; and *wandering*, I can with truth affirm, was mine; but this propensity in me was happily counteracted by inability from want of fortune to fulfil my wishes." We find him, however, frequently able to contrive a change of scene. His Swiss tour in 1790, his residence in France in 1791-2, his residence in Germany, 1798-9, have been already touched on. Then came a short visit to France in August 1802, which produced the sonnets on Westminster Bridge and Calais Beach. The tour in Scotland which was so fertile in poetry took place in 1803. A second tour in Scotland, in 1814, produced the *Brownie's Cell* and a few other pieces. And in July, 1820, he set out with his wife and sister and two or three other friends for a tour through Switzerland and Italy.

This tour produced a good deal of poetry; and here and

there are touches which recall the old inspiration. Such is the comparison of the clouds about the Engelberg to hovering angels; and such the description of the eclipse falling upon the population of statues which throng the pinnacles of Milan Cathedral. But for the most part the poems relating to this tour have an artificial look; the sentiments in the vale of Chamouni seem to have been laboriously summoned for the occasion; and the poet's admiration for the Italian maid and the Helvetian girl is a mere shadow of the old feeling for the Highland girl, to whom, in fact, he seems obliged to recur in order to give reality to his new emotion.

To conclude the subject of Wordsworth's travels, I will mention here that in 1823 he made a tour in Holland, and in 1824 in North Wales, where his sonnet to the torrent at the Devil's Bridge recalls the Swiss scenery seen in his youth with vigour and dignity. In 1828 he made another excursion in Belgium with Coleridge, and in 1829 he visited Ireland with his friend Mr. Marshall. Neither of these tours was productive. In 1831 he paid a visit with his daughter to Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, before his departure to seek health in Italy. Scott received them cordially, and had strength to take them to the Yarrow. "Of that excursion," says Wordsworth, "the verses *Yarrow Revisited* are a memorial. On our return in the afternoon we had to cross the Tweed, directly opposite Abbotsford. A rich, but sad light, of rather a purple than a golden hue, was spread over the Eildon hills at that moment; and, thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream (the Tweed), I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the sonnet beginning, *A trouble not of clouds nor weeping rain.* At noon on Thursday we left Abbotsford, and on

the morning of that day Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation, *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which, upon the whole, he had led. He had written in my daughter's album, before he came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her; and, while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her, in my presence, 'I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake; they are probably the last verses I shall ever write.' They show how much his mind was impaired: not by the strain of thought, but by the execution, some of the lines being imperfect, and one stanza wanting corresponding rhymes. One letter, the initial S., had been omitted in the spelling of his own name."

There was another tour in Scotland in 1833, which produced *Memorials* of little poetic value. And in 1837 he made a long tour in Italy with Mr. Crabb Robinson. But the poems which record this tour indicate a mind scarcely any longer susceptible to any vivid stimulus except from accustomed objects and ideas. The *Musings near Aquapendente* are musings on Scott and Helvellyn; the *Pine Tree of Monte Mario* is interesting because Sir George Beaumont has saved it from destruction; the *Cuckoo at Laverna* brings all childhood back into his heart. "I remember perfectly well," says Crabb Robinson, "that I heard the cuckoo at Laverna twice before he heard it; and that it absolutely fretted him that my ear was first favoured; and that he exclaimed with delight, 'I hear it! I hear it!'" This was his last foreign tour; nor, indeed, are these tours very noticeable except as showing that he was not blindly wedded to his own lake scenery; that his admiration could face comparisons, and

keep the same vividness when he was fresh from other orders of beauty.

The productions of these later years took for the most part a didactic rather than a descriptive form. In the volume entitled *Poems chiefly of Early and Later Years*, published in 1842, were many hortatory or ecclesiastical pieces of inferior merit, and among them various additions to the *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, a series of sonnets begun in 1821, but which he continued to enlarge, spending on them much of the energies of his later years. And although it is only in a few instances—as in the description of King's College, Cambridge—that these sonnets possess force or charm enough to rank them high as poetry, yet they assume a certain value when we consider not so much their own adequacy as the greater inadequacy of all rival attempts in the same direction.

The Episcopalian Churchman, in this country or in the United States, will certainly nowhere find presented to him in poetical form so dignified and comprehensive a record of the struggles and the glories, of the vicissitudes and the edification, of the great body to which he belongs. Next to the Anglican liturgy—though next at an immense interval—these sonnets may take rank as the authentic exposition of her historic being—an exposition delivered with something of her own unadorned dignity, and in her moderate and tranquil tone.

I would not, however, seem to claim too much. The religion which these later poems of Wordsworth's embody is rather the stately tradition of a great Church than the pangs and aspirations of a holy soul. There is little in them—whether for good or evil—of the stuff of which a Paul, a Francis, a Dominic are made. That fervent emotion—akin to the passion of love rather than to intellec-

tual or moral conviction—finds voice through singers of a very different tone. It is fed by an inward anguish and felicity which, to those who have not felt them, seem as causeless as a lover's moods; by wrestlings not with flesh and blood; by nights of despairing self-abasement; by ecstasies of an incommunicable peace. How great the gulf between Wordsworth and George Herbert!—Herbert "offering at heaven, growing and groaning thither,"—and Wordsworth, for whom the gentle regret of the lines,—

> Me this unchartered freedom tires,
> I feel the weight of chance desires,—

forms his most characteristic expression of the self-judgment of the solitary soul.

Wordsworth accomplished one reconciliation of great importance to mankind. He showed, as plainly in his way as Socrates had shown it long ago, with what readiness a profoundly original conception of the scheme of things will shape itself into the mould of an established and venerable faith. He united the religion of the philosopher with the religion of the churchman; one rarer thing he could not do; he could not unite the religion of the philosopher with the religion of the saint. It is, indeed, evident that the most inspiring feeling which breathes through Wordsworth's ecclesiastical pieces is not of a doctrinal, not even of a spiritual kind. The ecclesiastical as well as the political sentiments of his later years are prompted mainly by the admiring love with which he regarded the structure of English society—seen as that society was by him in its simplest and most poetic aspect. This concrete attachment to the scenes about him had always formed an important element in his character. Ideal politics, whether in Church or State,

had never occupied his mind, which sought rather to find its informing principles embodied in the England of his own day. The sonnet *On a Parsonage in Oxfordshire* well illustrates the loving minuteness with which he draws out the beauty and fitness of the established scheme of things,—the power of English country life to satisfy so many moods of feeling.

The country-seat of the English squire or nobleman has become—may we not say?—one of the world's chosen types of a happy and a stately home. And Wordsworth, especially in his poems which deal with Coleorton, has shown how deeply he felt the sway of such a home's hereditary majesty, its secure and tranquillizing charm. Yet there are moods when the heart which deeply feels the inequality of human lots turns towards a humbler ideal. There are moments when the broad park, the halls and towers, seem no longer the fitting frame of human greatness, but rather an isolating solitude, an unfeeling triumph over the poor.

In such a mood of mind it will not always satisfy us to dwell, as Wordsworth has so often done, on the virtue and happiness that gather round a cottage hearth,—which we must, after all, judge by a somewhat less exacting standard. We turn rather to the "refined rusticity" of an English Parsonage home.

> Where holy ground begins, unhallowed ends,
> Is marked by no distinguishable line;
> The turf unites, the pathways intertwine,—

and the clergyman's abode has but so much of dignity as befits the minister of the Church which is the hamlet's centre; enough to suggest the old Athenian boast of beauty without extravagance, and study without effemi-

nacy; enough to show that dwellings where not this life but another is the prevailing thought and care, yet need not lack the graces of culture, nor the loves of home.

The sonnet on *Seathwaite Chapel*, and the life of Robert Walker, the incumbent of Seathwaite, which is given at length in the notes to the sonnets on the Duddon, afford a still more characteristic instance of the clerical ideal towards which Wordsworth naturally turned. In Robert Walker he had a Cumbrian statesman turned into a practical saint; and he describes him with a gusto in which his laboured sonnets on *Laud* or on *Dissensions* are wholly deficient.

It was in social and political matters that the consequences of this idealizing view of the facts around him in Cumberland were most apparent. Take education, for example. Wordsworth, as has been already stated, was one of the earliest and most impressive assertors of the national duty of teaching every English child to read. He insists on this with a prosaic earnestness which places several pages of the *Excursion* among what may be called the standing bugbears which his poems offer to the inexperienced reader. And yet as soon as, through the exertions of Bell and Lancaster, there seems to be some chance of really educating the poor, Dr. Bell, whom Coleridge fondly imagines as surrounded in heaven by multitudes of grateful angels, is to Wordsworth a name of horror. The mistresses trained on his system are called "Dr. Bell's sour-looking teachers in petticoats." And the instruction received in these new-fangled schools is compared to "the training that fits a boxer for victory in the ring." The reason of this apparent inconsistency is not far to seek. Wordsworth's eyes were fixed on the village

life around him. Observation of that life impressed on him the imperative necessity of instruction in reading. But it was from a moral, rather than an intellectual point of view that he regarded it as needful, and, this opening into the world of ideas once secured, he held that the cultivation of the home affections and home duties was all that was needed beyond. And thus the Westmoreland dame, "in her summer seat in the garden, and in winter by the fireside," was elevated into the unexpected position of the ideal instructress of youth.

Conservatism of this kind could provoke nothing but a sympathetic smile. The case was different when the same conservative—even retrograde—tendency showed itself on subjects on which party-feeling ran high. A great part of the meditative energy of Wordsworth's later years was absorbed by questions towards whose solution he contributed no new element, and which filled him with disproportionate fears. And some injustice has been done to his memory by those who have not fully realized the predisposing causes which were at work,—the timidity of age, and the deep-rooted attachment to the England which he knew.

I speak of age, perhaps, somewhat prematurely, as the poet's gradually growing conservatism culminated in his opposition to the Catholic Relief Bill, before he was sixty years old. But there is nothing to wonder at in the fact that the mind of a man of brooding and solitary habits should show traces of advancing age earlier than is the case with statesmen or men of the world, who are obliged to keep themselves constantly alive to the ideas of the generation that is rising around them. A deadness to new impressions, an unwillingness to make intellectual efforts in fresh directions, a tendency to travel the same

mental pathways over and over again, and to wear the ruts of prejudice deeper at every step; such traces of age as these undoubtedly manifested themselves in the way in which the poet confronted the great series of changes—Catholic Emancipation, Reform Bill, New Poor Law, on which England entered about the year 1829. "My sixty-second year," Wordsworth writes, in 1832, "will soon be completed; and though I have been favoured thus far in health and strength beyond most men of my age, yet I feel its effects upon my spirits; they sink under a pressure of apprehension to which, at an earlier period of my life, they would probably have been superior." To this it must be added, that the increasing weakness of the poet's eyes seriously limited his means of information. He had never read much contemporary literature, and he read less than ever now. He had no fresh or comprehensive knowledge of the general condition of the country, and he really believed in the prognostication which was uttered by many also who did *not* believe in it, that with the Reform Bill the England which he knew and loved would practically disappear. But there was nothing in him of the angry polemic, nothing of the calumnious partisan. One of the houses where Mr. Wordsworth was most intimate and most welcome was that of a reforming member of parliament, who was also a manufacturer, thus belonging to the two classes for which the poet had the greatest abhorrence. But the intimacy was never for a moment shaken, and indeed in that house Mr. Wordsworth expounded the ruinous tendency of Reform and manufactures with even unusual copiousness, on account of the admiring affection with which he felt himself surrounded. The tone in which he spoke was never such as could give pain or excite antagonism; and—if I may be pardoned for descend-

ing to a detail which well illustrates my position—the only rejoinder which these diatribes provoked was that the poet on his arrival was sometimes decoyed into uttering them to the younger members of the family, whose time was of less value, so as to set his mind free to return to those topics of more permanent interest where his conversation kept to the last all that tenderness, nobility, wisdom, which in that family, as in many others familiar with the celebrated persons of that day, won for him a regard and a reverence such as was accorded to no other man.

To those, indeed, who realized how deeply he felt these changes,—how profoundly his notion of national happiness was bound up with a lovely and vanishing ideal,—the prominent reflection was that the hopes and principles which maintained through all an underlying hope and trust in the future must have been potent indeed. It was no easy optimism which prompted the lines written in 1837—one of his latest utterances—in which he speaks to himself with strong self-judgment and resolute hope. On reading them one shrinks from dwelling longer upon an old man's weakness and a brave man's fears.

If this great world of joy and pain
  Revolve in one sure track;
If Freedom, set, revive again,
  And Virtue, flown, come back,—

Woe to the purblind crew who fill
  The heart with each day's care,
Nor learn, from past and future, skill
  To bear and to forbear.

The poet had also during these years more of private sorrow than his tranquil life had for a long time experienced. In 1832 his sister had a most serious illness,

which kept her for many months in a state of great prostration, and left her, when the physical symptoms abated, with her intellect painfully impaired, and her bright nature permanently overclouded. Coleridge, too, was nearing his end. "He and my beloved sister," writes Wordsworth, in 1832, "are the two beings to whom my intellect is most indebted, and they are now proceeding, as it were, *pari passu*, along the path of sickness, I will not say towards the grave, but I trust towards a blessed immortality."

In July, 1834, "every mortal power of Coleridge was frozen at its marvellous source." And although the early intimacy had scarcely been maintained,—though the "comfortless and hidden well" had, for a time at least, replaced the "living murmuring fount of love" which used to spring beside Wordsworth's door,—yet the loss was one which the surviving poet deeply felt. Coleridge was the only contemporary man of letters with whom Wordsworth's connexion had been really close; and when Wordsworth is spoken of as one of a group of poets exemplifying in various ways the influence of the Revolution, it is not always remembered how very little he had to do with the other famous men of his time. Scott and Southey were valued friends, but he thought little of Scott's poetry, and less of Southey's. Byron and Shelley he seems scarcely to have read; and he failed altogether to appreciate Keats. But to Coleridge his mind constantly reverted; he called him "the most wonderful man he had ever known," and he kept him as the ideal auditor of his own poems, long after Coleridge had listened to the *Prelude*,—

> A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
> To their own music chanted.

In 1836, moreover, died one for whom Coleridge, as well as Wordsworth, had felt a very high respect and regard—Sarah Hutchinson, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, and long the inmate of Wordsworth's household. This most valued friend had been another instance of the singular good fortune which attended Wordsworth in his domestic connexions; and when she was laid in Grasmere churchyard, the stone above her tomb expressed the wish of the poet and his wife that, even as her remains were laid beside their dead children's, so their own bodies also might be laid by hers.

And now, while the inner circle of friends and relations began to pass away, the outer circle of admirers was rapidly spreading. Between the years 1830 and 1840 Wordsworth passed from the apostle of a clique into the most illustrious man of letters in England. The rapidity of this change was not due to any remarkable accident, nor to the appearance of any new work of genius. It was merely an extreme instance of what must always occur where an author, running counter to the fashion of his age, has to create his own public in defiance of the established critical powers. The disciples whom he draws round him are for the most part young; the established authorities are for the most part old; so that by the time that the original poet is about sixty years old, most of his admirers will be about forty, and most of his critics will be dead. His admirers now become his accredited critics; his works are widely introduced to the public; and if they are really good his reputation is secure. In Wordsworth's case the detractors had been unusually persistent, and the reaction, when it came, was therefore unusually violent; it was even somewhat factitious in its extent; and the poems were forced by

enthusiasts upon a public which was only half ripe for them. After the poet's death a temporary counter-reaction succeeded, and his fame is only now finding its permanent level.

Among the indications of growing popularity was the publication of an American edition of Wordsworth's poems in 1837, by Professor Reed of Philadelphia, with whom the poet interchanged many letters of interest. "The acknowledgments," he says in one of these, "which I receive from the vast continent of America are among the most grateful that reach me. What a vast field is there open to the English mind, acting through our noble language! Let us hope that our authors of true genius will not be unconscious of that thought, or inattentive to the duty which it imposes upon them, of doing their utmost to instruct, to purify, and to elevate their readers."

But of all the manifestations of the growing honour in which Wordsworth was held, none was more marked or welcome than the honorary degree of D.C.L. conferred on him by the University of Oxford in the summer of 1839. Keble, as Professor of Poetry, introduced him in words of admiring reverence, and the enthusiasm of the audience was such as had never been evoked in that place before, "except upon the occasions of the visits of the Duke of Wellington." The collocation was an interesting one. The special claim advanced for Wordsworth by Keble in his Latin oration was "that he had shed a celestial light upon the affections, the occupations, the piety of the poor." And to many men besides the author of the *Christian Year* it seemed that this striking scene was, as it were, another visible triumph of the temper of mind which is of the essence of Christianity; a recognition that one spirit

more had become as a little child, and had entered into the kingdom of heaven.

In October, 1842, another token of public respect was bestowed on him in the shape of an annuity of 300*l.* a year from the Civil List for distinguished literary merit. "I need scarcely add," says Sir Robert Peel, in making the offer, "that the acceptance by you of this mark of favour from the Crown, considering the grounds on which it is proposed, will impose no restraint upon your perfect independence, and involve no obligation of a personal nature." In March, 1843, came the death of Southey, and in a few days Wordsworth received a letter from Earl De la Warr, the Lord Chamberlain, offering him, in the most courteous terms, the office of Poet Laureate, which, however, he respectfully declined as imposing duties, "which, far advanced in life as I am, I cannot venture to undertake."

This letter brought a reply from the Lord Chamberlain, pressing the office on him again, and a letter from Sir Robert Peel which gave dignified expression to the national feeling in the matter. "The offer," he says, "was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain, with my entire concurrence, not for the purpose of imposing on you any onerous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets. The Queen entirely approved of the nomination, and there is one unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal (and it is pretty generally known) that there could not be a question about the selection. Do not be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing *required* from you. But as the Queen can select for this

honourable appointment no one whose claims for respect and honour, on account of eminence as a poet, can be placed in competition with yours, I trust you will not longer hesitate to accept it."

This letter overcame the aged poet's scruples; and he filled with silent dignity the post of Laureate till after seven years' space a worthy successor received

> This laurel greener from the brows
> Of him that uttered nothing base.

CHAPTER XII.

LETTERS ON THE KENDAL AND WINDERMERE RAILWAY—CONCLUSION.

WORDSWORTH'S appointment to the Laureateship was significant in more ways than one. He was so much besides a poet, that his appointment implied something of a national recognition, not only of his past poetical achievements, but of the substantial truth of that body of principles which through many years of neglect and ridicule he had consistently supported. There was therefore nothing incongruous in the fact that the only composition of any importance which Wordsworth produced after he became Laureate was in prose—his two letters on the projected Kendal and Windermere railway, 1844. No topic, in fact, could have arisen on which the veteran poet could more fitly speak with whatever authority his official spokesmanship of the nation's higher life could give, for it was a topic with every aspect of which he was familiar; and so far as the extension of railways through the Lake country was defended on grounds of popular benefit, (and not merely of commercial advantage), no one, certainly, had shown himself more capable of estimating at their full value such benefits as were here proposed.

The results which follow on a large incursion of visitors

into the Lake country may be considered under two heads, as affecting the residents, or as affecting the visitors themselves. And first as to the residents. Of the wealthier class of these I say nothing, as it will perhaps be thought that their inconvenience is outweighed by the possible profits which the railway may bring to speculators or contractors. But the effect produced on the poorer residents,—on the peasantry,—is a serious matter, and the danger which was distantly foreseen by Wordsworth has since his day assumed grave proportions. And lest the poet's estimate of the simple virtue which is thus jeopardized should be suspected of partiality, it may be allowable to corroborate it by the testimony of an eminent man, not a native of the district, though a settler therein in later life, and whose writings, perhaps, have done more than any man's since Wordsworth to increase the sum of human enjoyment derived both from Art and from Nature.

"The Border peasantry of Scotland and England," says Mr. Ruskin,[1] "painted with absolute fidelity by Scott and Wordsworth,—(for leading types out of this exhaustless portraiture, I may name Dandie Dinmont, and Michael,) are hitherto a scarcely injured race; whose strength and virtue yet survive to represent the body and soul of England, before her days of mechanical decrepitude, and commercial dishonour. There are men working in my own fields who might have fought with Henry the Fifth at Agincourt, without being discerned from among his knights; I can take my tradesmen's word for a thousand pounds; my garden gate opens on the latch to the public road, by day and night, without fear of any foot entering

[1] *A Protest against the Extension of Railways in the Lake District.*—Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1876.

but my own; and my girl-guests may wander by road or moorland, or through every bosky dell of this wild wood, free as the heather-bees or squirrels. What effect on the character of such a population will be produced by the influx of that of the suburbs of our manufacturing towns there is evidence enough, if the reader cares to ascertain the facts, in every newspaper on his morning table."

There remains the question of how the greatest benefit is to be secured to visitors to the country, quite apart from the welfare of its more permanent inhabitants. At first sight this question seems to present a problem of a well-known order—to find the point of maximum pleasure to mankind in a case where the intensity of the pleasure varies inversely as its extension—where each fresh person who shares it diminishes *pro tanto* the pleasure of the rest. But, as Wordsworth has pointed out, this is not in reality the question here. To the great mass of cheap excursionists the characteristic scenery of the Lakes is in itself hardly a pleasure at all. The pleasure, indeed, which they derive from contact with Nature is great and important, but it is one which could be offered to them, not only as well but much better, near their own homes.

"It is benignly ordained that green fields, clear blue skies, running streams of pure water, rich groves and woods, orchards, and all the ordinary varieties of rural nature should find an easy way to the affections of all men. But a taste beyond this, however desirable it may be that every one should possess it, is not to be implanted at once; it must be gradually developed both in nations and individuals. Rocks and mountains, torrents and wide-spread waters, and all those features of nature which go to the composition of such scenes as this part of England is distinguished for, cannot, in their finer relations to the human mind, be comprehended, or even very

imperfectly conceived, without processes of culture or opportunities of observation in some degree habitual. In the eye of thousands, and tens of thousands, a rich meadow, with fat cattle grazing upon it, or the sight of what they would call a heavy crop of corn, is worth all that the Alps and Pyrenees in their utmost grandeur and beauty could show to them; and it is noticeable what trifling conventional prepossessions will, in common minds, not only preclude pleasure from the sight of natural beauty, but will even turn it into an object of disgust. In the midst of a small pleasure-ground immediately below my house, rises a detached rock, equally remarkable for the beauty of its form, the ancient oaks that grow out of it, and the flowers and shrubs which adorn it. 'What a nice place would this be,' said a Manchester tradesman, pointing to the rock, 'if that ugly lump were but out of the way.' Men as little advanced in the pleasure which such objects give to others, are so far from being rare that they may be said fairly to represent a large majority of mankind. This is the fact, and none but the deceiver and the willingly deceived can be offended by its being stated."

And, since this is so, the true means of raising the taste of the masses consists, as Wordsworth proceeds to point out, in giving them,—not a few hurried glimpses of what is above their comprehension,—but permanent opportunities of learning at leisure the first great lessons which Nature has to teach. Since he wrote thus our towns have spread their blackness wider still, and the provision of parks for the recreation of our urban population has become a pressing national need. And here again the very word *recreation* suggests another unfitness in the Lake country for these purposes. Solitude is as characteristic of that region as beauty, and what the mass of mankind need for their refreshment—most naturally and justly—is not solitude but society.

> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills,

is to them merely a drawback, to be overcome by moving about in large masses, and by congregating in chosen resorts with vehement hilarity. It would be most unreasonable to wish to curtail the social expansion of men whose lives are for the most part passed in a monotonous round of toil. But is it kinder and wiser,—from any point of view but the railway shareholder's,—to allure them into excursion trains by the prestige of a scenery which is to them (as it was to all classes a century or two ago) at best indifferent, or to provide them near at hand with their needed space for rest and play, not separated from their homes by hours of clamour and crowding, nor broken up by barren precipices, nor drenched with sweeping storm?

Unquestionably it is the masses whom we have first to consider. Sooner than that the great mass of the dwellers in towns should be debarred from the influences of Nature —sooner than that they should continue for another century to be debarred as now they are—it might be better that Cumbrian statesmen and shepherds should be turned into innkeepers and touts, and that every poet, artist, dreamer, in England should be driven to seek his solitude at the North Pole. But it is the mere futility of sentiment to pretend that there need be any real collision of interests here. There is space enough in England yet for all to enjoy in their several manners, if those who have the power would leave some unpolluted rivers, and some unblighted fields, for the health and happiness of the factory-hand, whose toil is for their fortunes, and whose degradation is their shame.

Wordsworth, while indicating, with some such reasoning as this, the true method of promoting the education of the mass of men in natural joys, was assuredly not

likely to forget that in every class, even the poorest, are found exceptional spirits which some inbred power has attuned already to the stillness and glory of the hills. In what way the interests of such men may best be consulted, he has discussed in the following passage.

> "O nature, a' thy shows an' forms
> To feeling pensive hearts hae charms!"

"So exclaimed the Ayrshire ploughman, speaking of ordinary rural nature under the varying influences of the seasons; and the sentiment has found an echo in the bosoms of thousands in as humble a condition as he himself was when he gave vent to it. But then they *were* feeling, pensive hearts—men who would be among the first to lament the facility with which they had approached this region, by a sacrifice of so much of its quiet and beauty as, from the intrusion of a railway, would be inseparable. What can, in truth, be more absurd than that either rich or poor should be spared the trouble of travelling by the high roads over so short a space, according to their respective means, if the unavoidable consequence must be a great disturbance of the retirement, and, in many places, a destruction of the beauty, of the country which the parties are come in search of? Would not this be pretty much like the child's cutting up his drum to learn where the sound came from?"

The truth of these words has become more conspicuous since Wordsworth's day. The Lake country is now both engirdled and intersected with railways. The point to which even the poorest of genuine lovers of the mountains could desire that his facilities of cheap locomotion should be carried has been not only reached but far overpassed. If he is not content to dismount from his railway car-

riage at Coniston, or Seascale, or Bowness,—at Penrith, or Troutbeck, or Keswick,—and to move at eight miles an hour in a coach, or at four miles an hour on foot, while he studies that small intervening tract of country, of which every mile is a separate gem,—when, we may ask, *is* he to dismount? what *is* he to study? Or is nothing to be expected from Nature but a series of dissolving views?

It is impossible to feel sanguine as to the future of this irreplaceable national possession. A real delight in scenery, —apart from the excitements of sport or mountaineering, for which Scotland and Switzerland are better suited than Cumberland,—is still too rare a thing among the wealthier as among the poorer classes to be able to compete with such a power as the Railway Interest. And it is little likely now that the Government of England should act with regard to this district as the Government of the United States has acted with regard to the Yosemite and Yellowstone valleys, and guard as a national possession the beauty which will become rarer and more precious with every generation of men. But it is in any case desirable that Wordsworth's unanswered train of reasoning on the subject should be kept in view—that it should be clearly understood that the one argument for making more railways through the Lakes is that they may possibly pay; while it is certain that each railway extension is injurious to the peasantry of the district, and to all visitors who really care for its scenery, while conferring no benefit on the crowds who are dragged many miles to what they do not enjoy, instead of having what they really want secured to them, as it ought to be, at their own doors.

It is probable that all this will continue to be said in vain. Railways, and mines, and waterworks will have

their way, till injury has become destruction. The natural sanctuary of England, the nurse of simple and noble natures, "the last region which Astræa touches with flying feet," will be sacrificed—it is scarcely possible to doubt it—to the greed of gain. We must seek our consolation in the thought that no outrage on Nature is mortal; that the ever-springing affections of men create for themselves continually some fresh abode, and inspire some new landscape with a consecrating history, and as it were with a silent soul. Yet it will be long ere round some other lakes, upon some other hill, shall cluster memories as pure and high as those which hover still around Rydal and Grasmere, and on Helvellyn's windy summit, "and by Glenridding Screes and low Glencoign."

With this last word of protest and warning,—uttered, as it may seem to the reader, with unexpected force and conviction from out of the tranquillity of a serene old age,—Wordsworth's mission is concluded. The prophecy of his boyhood is fulfilled, and the "dear native regions" whence his dawning genius rose have been gilded by the last ray of its declining fire. There remains but the domestic chronicle of a few more years of mingled sadness and peace. And I will first cite a characteristic passage from a letter to his American correspondent, Mr. Reed, describing his presentation as Laureate to the Queen:—

"The reception given me by the Queen at her ball was most gracious. Mrs. Everett, the wife of your Minister, among many others, was a witness to it, without knowing who I was. It moved her to the shedding of tears. This effect was in part produced, I suppose, by American habits of feeling, as pertaining to a republican government. To see a grey-haired man of seventy-five years of

age, kneeling down in a large assembly to kiss the hand of a young woman, is a sight for which institutions essentially democratic do not prepare a spectator of either sex, and must naturally place the opinions upon which a republic is founded, and the sentiments which support it, in strong contrast with a government based and upheld as ours is."

In the same letter the poet introduces an ominous allusion to the state of his daughter's health. Dora, his only daughter who survived childhood, was the darling of Wordsworth's age. In her wayward gaiety and bright intelligence there was much to remind him of his sister's youth; and his clinging nature wound itself round this new Dora as tenderly as it had ever done round her who was now only the object of loving compassion and care. In 1841 Dora Wordsworth married Mr. Quillinan, an ex-officer of the Guards, and a man of great literary taste and some original power. In 1821 he had settled for a time in the vale of Rydal, mainly for the sake of Wordsworth's society; and ever since then he had been an intimate and valued friend. He had been married before, but his wife died in 1822, leaving him two daughters, one of whom was named from the murmuring Rotha, and was god-child of the poet. Shortly after marriage, Dora Quillinan's health began to fail. In 1845 the Quillinans went to Oporto in search of health, and returned in 1846, in the trust that it was regained. But in July 1847 Dora Quillinan died at Rydal, and left her father to mourn for his few remaining years his "immeasurable loss."

The depth and duration of Wordsworth's grief in such bereavements as fell to his lot, was such as to make his friends thankful that his life had on the whole been guided through ways of so profound a peace.

Greatly, indeed, have they erred, who have imagined him as cold, or even as by nature tranquil. "What strange workings," writes one from Rydal Mount when the poet was in his sixty-ninth year,—"what strange workings are there in his great mind! How fearfully strong are all his feelings and affections! If his intellect had been less powerful they must have destroyed him long ago." Such, in fact, was the impression which he gave to those who knew him best throughout life. The look of premature age, which De Quincey insists on; the furrowed and rugged countenance, the brooding intensity of the eye, the bursts of anger at the report of evil doings, the lonely and violent roamings over the mountains,—all told of a strong absorption and a smothered fire. His own description of himself (for such we must probably hold it to be) in his *Imitation of the Castle of Indolence*, unexpected as it is by the ordinary reader, carries for those who knew him the stamp of truth.

Full many a time, upon a stormy night,
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height:
Oft did we see him driving full in view
At mid-day when the sun was shining bright;
What ill was on him, what he had to do,
A mighty wonder bred among our quiet crew.

Ah! piteous sight it was to see this Man
When he came back to us, a withered flower,—
Or like a sinful creature, pale and wan.
Down would he sit; and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour:
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower,
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay;
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was
Whenever from our valley he withdrew;
For happier soul no living creature has
Than he had, being here the long day through.
Some thought he was a lover, and did woo:
Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong:
But Verse was what he had been wedded to;
And his own mind did like a tempest strong
Come to him thus, and drove the weary wight along.

An excitement which vents itself in bodily exercise carries its own sedative with it. And in comparing Wordsworth's nature with that of other poets whose career has been less placid, we may say that he was perhaps not less excitable than they, but that it was his constant endeavour to avoid all excitement, save of the purely poetic kind; and that the outward circumstances of his life,—his mediocrity of fortune, happy and early marriage, and absence of striking personal charm,—made it easy for him to adhere to a method of life which was, in the truest sense of the term, *stoic*—stoic alike in its practical abstinences and in its calm and grave ideal. Purely poetic excitement, however, is hard to maintain at a high point; and the description quoted above of the voice which came through the stormy night should be followed by another—by the same candid and self-picturing hand—which represents the same habits in a quieter light.

"Nine-tenths of my verses," says the poet in 1843, "have been murmured out in the open air. One day a stranger, having walked round the garden and grounds of Rydal Mount, asked of one of the female servants, who happened to be at the door, permission to see her master's study. 'This,' said she, leading him forward, 'is my master's library, where he keeps his books, but his study is out of doors.' After a long absence from home, it has

more than once happened that some one of my cottage neighbours (not of the double-coach-house cottages) has said, 'Well, there he is! we are glad to hear him *booing* about again.'"

Wordsworth's health, steady and robust for the most part, indicated the same restrained excitability. While he was well able to resist fatigue, exposure to weather, &c. there were, in fact, three things which his peculiar constitution made it difficult for him to do, and unfortunately those three things were reading, writing, and the composition of poetry. A frequently recurring inflammation of the eyes, caught originally from exposure to a cold wind when overheated by exercise, but always much aggravated by mental excitement, sometimes prevented his reading for months together. His symptoms when he attempted to hold the pen are thus described, in a published letter to Sir George Beaumont (1803):—

"I do not know from what cause it is, but during the last three years I have never had a pen in my hand for five minutes before my whole frame becomes a bundle of uneasiness; a perspiration starts out all over me, and my chest is oppressed in a manner which I cannot describe." While as to the labour of composition his sister says (September 1800): "He writes with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain and internal weakness about his left side and stomach, which now often makes it impossible for him to write when he is, in mind and feelings, in such a state that he could do it without difficulty."

But turning to the brighter side of things—to the joys rather than the pains of the sensitive body and spirit—we find in Wordsworth's later years much of happiness on which to dwell. The memories which his name recalls

are for the most part of thoughtful kindnesses, of simple-hearted joy in feeling himself at last appreciated, of tender sympathy with the young. Sometimes it is a recollection of some London drawing-room, where youth and beauty surrounded the rugged old man with an eager admiration which fell on no unwilling heart. Sometimes it is a story of some assemblage of young and old, rich and poor, from all the neighbouring houses and cottages, at Rydal Mount, to keep the aged poet's birthday with a simple feast and rustic play. Sometimes it is a report of some fireside gathering at Lancrigg or Foxhow, where the old man grew eloquent as he talked of Burns and Coleridge, of Homer and Virgil, of the true aim of poetry and the true happiness of man. Or we are told of some last excursion to well-loved scenes; of holly-trees planted by the poet's hands to simulate nature's decoration on the craggy hill.

Such are the memories of those who best remember him. To those who were young children while his last years went by he seemed a kind of mystical embodiment of the lakes and mountains round him—a presence without which they would not be what they were. And now he is gone, and their untouched and early charm is going too.

> Heu, tua nobis
> Pæne simul tecum solatia rapta, Menalca!

Rydal Mount, of which he had at one time feared to be deprived, was his to the end. He still paced the terrace-walks—but now the flat terrace oftener than the sloping one—whence the eye travels to lake and mountain across a tossing gulf of green. The doves that so long had been wont to answer with murmurs of their own to his "half-formed melodies" still hung in the trees above his path-

way; and many who saw him there must have thought of the lines in which his favourite poet congratulates himself that he has not been exiled from his home.

> Calm as thy sacred streams thy years shall flow;
> Groves which thy youth has known thine age shall know;
> Here, as of old, Hyblæan bees shall twine
> Their mazy murmur into dreams of thine,—
> Still from the hedge's willow-bloom shall come
> Through summer silences a slumberous hum,—
> Still from the crag shall lingering winds prolong
> The half-heard cadence of the woodman's song,—
> While evermore the doves, thy love and care,
> Fill the tall elms with sighing in the air.

Yet words like these fail to give the solemnity of his last years,—the sense of grave retrospection, of humble self-judgment, of hopeful looking to the end. "It is indeed a deep satisfaction," he writes near the close of life, "to hope and believe that my poetry will be while it lasts, a help to the cause of virtue and truth, especially among the young. As for myself, it seems now of little moment how long I may be remembered. When a man pushes off in his little boat into the great seas of Infinity and Eternity, it surely signifies little how long he is kept in sight by watchers from the shore."

And again, to an intimate friend, "Worldly-minded I am not; on the contrary, my wish to benefit those within my humble sphere strengthens seemingly in exact proportion to my inability to realize those wishes. What I lament most is that the spirituality of my nature does not expand and rise the nearer I approach the grave, as yours does, and as it fares with my beloved partner."

The aged poet might feel the loss of some vividness of emotion, but his thoughts dwelt more and more constantly on the unseen world. One of the images which recurs

oftenest to his friends is that of the old man as he would stand against the window of the dining-room at Rydal Mount and read the Psalms and Lessons for the day; of the tall bowed figure and the silvery hair; of the deep voice which always faltered when among the prayers he came to the words which give thanks for those "who have departed this life in Thy faith and fear."

There is no need to prolong the narration. As healthy infancy is the same for all, so the old age of all good men brings philosopher and peasant once more together, to meet with the same thoughts the inevitable hour. Whatever the well-fought fight may have been, rest is the same for all.

> Retirement then might hourly look
> Upon a soothing scene;
> Age steal to his allotted nook
> Contented and serene;
> With heart as calm as lakes that sleep,
> In frosty moonlight glistening,
> Or mountain torrents, where they creep
> Along a channel smooth and deep,
> To their own far-off murmurs listening.

What touch has given to these lines their impress of an unfathomable peace? For there speaks from them a tranquillity which seems to overcome our souls; which makes us feel in the midst of toil and passion that we are disquieting ourselves in vain; that we are travelling to a region where these things shall not be; that "so shall immoderate fear leave us, and inordinate love shall die."

Wordsworth's last days were absolutely tranquil. A cold caught on a Sunday afternoon walk brought on a pleurisy. He lay for some weeks in a state of passive weakness; and at last Mrs. Wordsworth said to him, "William, you are going to Dora." "He made no reply at

the time, and the words seem to have passed unheeded: indeed, it was not certain that they had been even heard. More than twenty-four hours afterwards one of his nieces came into his room, and was drawing aside the curtain of his chamber, and then, as if awakening from a quiet sleep, he said, 'Is that Dora?'"

On Tuesday, April 23, 1850, as his favourite cuckoo-clock struck the hour of noon, his spirit passed away. His body was buried, as he had wished, in Grasmere churchyard. Around him the dalesmen of Grasmere lie beneath the shade of sycamore and yew; and Rotha's murmur mourns the pausing of that "music sweeter than her own." And surely of him, if of any one, we may think as of a man who was so in accord with Nature, so at one with the very soul of things, that there can be no Mansion of the Universe which shall not be to him a home, no Governor who will not accept him among His servants, and satisfy him with love and peace.

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Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

[redacted]

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

SOUTHEY

SOUTHEY

BY

EDWARD DOWDEN

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1906

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First Edition 1888
Reprinted 1902, 1906

NOTE.

I AM indebted throughout to *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, edited by the Rev. C. C. Southey, six volumes, 1850, and to *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, edited by J. W. Warter, B.D., four volumes, 1856. Many other sources have been consulted. I thank Mr. W. J. Craig for help given in examining Southey manuscripts, and Mr. T. W. Lyster for many valuable suggestions.

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SOUTHEY.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

No one of his generation lived so completely in and for literature as did Southey. "He is," said Byron, "the only existing entire man of letters." With him literature served the needs both of the material life and of the life of the intellect and imagination; it was his means of earning daily bread, and also the means of satisfying his highest ambitions and desires. This which was true of Southey at five-and-twenty years of age was equally true at forty, fifty, sixty. During all that time he was actively at work accumulating, arranging, and distributing knowledge; no one among his contemporaries gathered so large a store from the records of the past; no one toiled with such steadfast devotion to enrich his age; no one occupied so honourable a place in so many provinces of literature. There is not perhaps any single work of Southey's the loss of which would be felt by us as a capital misfortune. But the more we consider his total work, its mass, its variety, its high excellence, the more we come to regard it as a memorable, an extraordinary achievement.

Southey himself, however, stands above his works. In subject they are disconnected, and some of them appear like huge fragments. It is the presence of one mind, one character in all, easily recognizable by him who knows Southey, which gives them a vital unity. We could lose the *History of Brazil*, or the *Peninsular War*, or the *Life of Wesley*, and feel that if our possessions were diminished, we ourselves in our inmost being had undergone no loss which might not easily be endured. But he who has once come to know Southey's voice as the voice of a friend, so clear, so brave, so honest, so full of boyish glee, so full of manly tenderness, feels that if he heard that voice no more a portion of his life were gone. To make acquaintance with the man is better than to study the subjects of his books. In such a memoir as the present, to glance over the contents of a hundred volumes, dealing with matters widely remote, would be to wander upon a vast circumference when we ought to strike for the centre. If the reader come to know Southey as he read and wrote in his library, as he rejoiced and sorrowed among his children, as he held hands with good old friends, as he walked by the lakeside, or lingered to muse near some mountain stream, as he hoped and feared for England, as he thought of life and death and a future beyond the grave, the end of this small book will have been attained.

At the age of forty-six Robert Southey wrote the first of a series of autobiographic sketches; his spirit was courageous, and life had been good to him; but it needed more than his courage to live again in remembrance with so many of the dead; having told the story of his boyhood, he had not the heart to go farther. The autobiography rambles pleasantly into by-ways of old Bath and Bristol life; at Westminster School it leaves him. So far

we shall go along with it; for what lies beyond, a record of Southey's career must be brought together from a multitude of letters, published or still remaining in manuscript, and from many and massy volumes in prose and verse, which show how the industrious hours sped by.

Southey's father was a linen-draper of Bristol. He had left his native fields under the Quantock hills to take service in a London shop, but his heart suffered in its exile. The tears were in his eyes one day when a porter went by carrying a hare, and the remembrance suddenly came to him of his rural sports. On his master's death he took a place behind the counter of Britton's shop in Wine Street, Bristol, and when twelve years later he opened a shop for himself in the same business he had, with tender reminiscence, a hare painted for a device upon his windows. He kept his grandfather's sword which had been borne in Monmouth's rebellion; he loved the chimes and quarter-boys of Christ Church, Bristol, and tried as churchwarden to preserve them. What else of poetry there may have been in the life of Robert Southey the elder is lost among the buried epics of prosaic lives. We cannot suppose that as a man of business he was sharp and shrewd; he certainly was not successful. When the draper's work was done, he whiled away the hours over Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, his only reading. For library some score of books shared with his wine-glasses the small cupboard in the back parlour; its chief treasures were the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, some eighteenth-century poems, dead even then, and one or two immortal plays.

On Sundays Mr. Southey, then a bachelor, would stroll to Bedminster to dine at the pleasant house of Mrs. Hill—a substantial house to which Edward Hill, gentle-

man, brought his second wife, herself a widow; a house rich in old English comfort, with its diamond-tiled garden-way and jessamine-covered porch, its wainscoted "best kitchen," its blue room and green room and yellow room, its grapes and green-gages and nectarines, its sweet-williams and stocks and syringas. Among these pleasant surroundings the young draper found it natural on Sabbath afternoons to make love to pleasant Margaret Hill. "Never," writes her son Robert Southey, "never was any human being blessed with a sweeter temper or a happier disposition." Her face had been marred by the seams of small-pox, but its brightness and kindness remained; there was a charm in her clear hazel eyes, so good a temper and so alert an understanding were to be read in them. She had not gone to any school except one for dancing, and "her state," declares Southey, "was the more gracious;" her father had, however, given her lessons in the art of whistling; she could turn a tune like a blackbird. From a mother, able to see a fact swiftly and surely, and who knew both to whistle and to dance, Southey inherited that alertness of intellect and that joyous temper, without which he could not have accomplished his huge task-work, never yielding to a mood of rebellion or *ennui*.

After the courtship on Sunday afternoons came the wedding, and before long a beautiful boy was born, who died in infancy. On the 12th of August, 1774, Mrs. Southey was again in the pain of childbirth. "Is it a boy?" she asked the nurse. "Ay, a great ugly boy!" With such salutation from his earliest critic the future poet-laureate entered this world. "God forgive me," his mother exclaimed afterwards in relating the event, "when I saw what a great red creature it was, covered with rolls of fat, I thought I should never be able to love him."

In due time the red creature proved to be a distinctively human child whose curly hair and sensitive feelings made him a mother's darling. He had not yet heard of sentiment or of Rousseau, but he wept at the pathos of romantic literature, at the tragic fate of the "Children sliding on the ice all on a summer's day," or the too early death of "Billy Pringle's pig," and he would beg the reciters not to proceed. His mother's household cares multiplied, and Southey, an unbreeched boy of three years, was borne away one morning by his faithful foster-mother Patty to be handed over to the tender mercies of a schoolmistress. Ma'am Powell was old and grim, and with her lashless eyes gorgonized the new pupil; on the seizure of her hand he woke to rebellion, kicking lustily and crying, "Take me to Pat! I don't like ye! you've got ugly eyes! take me to Pat, I say!" But soft-hearted Pat had gone home, sobbing.

Mrs. Southey's one weakness was that of submitting too meekly to the tyranny of an imperious half-sister, Miss Tyler, the daughter of Grandmother Hill by her first marriage. For this weakness there were excuses; Miss Tyler was an elder sister by many years; she had property of her own; she passed for a person of fashion, and was still held to be a beauty; above all, she had the advantage of a temper so capricious and violent that to quarrel with her at all might be to lose her sisterly regard for ever. Her struggling sister's eldest son took Aunt Tyler's fancy; it was a part of her imperious kindness to adopt or half-adopt the boy. Aunt Tyler lived in Bath; in no other city could a gentlewoman better preserve health and good looks, or enjoy so much society of distinction on easy but not too ample means; it possessed a charming theatre, and Miss Tyler was a patron

of the drama. To Bath, then, she had brought her portrait by Gainsborough, her inlaid cabinet of ebony, her cherry-wood arm-chair, her mezzotints after Angelica Kaufmann, her old-maid hoards of this and of that, the woman servant she had saved from the toils of matrimony, and the old man harmless as one of the crickets which he nightly fed until he died. To Bath Miss Tyler also brought her nephew, and she purchased a copy of the new gospel of education, Rousseau's *Emilius*, in order to ascertain how Nature should have her perfect work with a boy in petticoats. Here the little victim, without companions, without play, without the child's beatitudes of dirt and din, was carefully swathed in the odds and ends of habits and humours which belonged to a maiden lady of a whimsical, irrational, and self-indulgent temper. Miss Tyler, when not prepared for company, wandered about the house—a faded beauty—in the most faded and fluttering of costumes; but in her rags she was spotless. To preserve herself and her worldly gear from the dust, for ever floating and gathering in this our sordid atmosphere, was the business of her life. Her acquaintances she divided into the clean and the unclean—the latter class being much the more numerous. Did one of the unclean take a seat in her best room, the infected chair must be removed to the garden to be aired. But did he seat himself in Miss Tyler's own armchair, pressing his abominable person into Miss Tyler's own cushion, then passionate were her dismay and despair. To her favourites she was gracious and high-bred, regaling them with reminiscences of Lady Bateman, and with her views on taste, Shakspere, and the musical glasses. For her little nephew she invented the pretty recreation of pricking playbills; all capital letters were to be illumi-

nated with pin-holes; it was not a boisterous nor an ungenteel sport. At other times the boy would beguile the hours in the garden, making friends with flowers and insects, or looking wistfully towards that sham castle on Claverton Hill, seat of romantic mystery, but, alas! two miles away, and therefore beyond the climbing powers of a refined gentlewoman. Southey's hardest daily trial was the luxurious morning captivity of his aunt's bed; still at nine, at ten that lady lay in slumber; the small urchin, long perked up and broad awake, feared by sound or stir to rouse her, and would nearly wear his little wits away in plotting re-arrangements of the curtain-pattern, or studying the motes at mazy play in the slant sunbeam. His happiest season was when all other little boys were fast asleep; then, splendid in his gayest "jam," he sat beside Miss Tyler in a front row of the best part of the theatre; when the yawning fits had passed, he was as open-eyed as the oldest, and stared on, filling his soul with the spectacle, till the curtain fell.

The "great red creature," Robert Southey, had now grown into the lean greyhound of his after-life; his long legs wanted to be stirring, and there were childish ambitions already at work in his head. Freedom became dearer to him than the daintiest cage, and when at six he returned to his father's house in Wine Street, it was with rejoicing. Now, too, his aunt issued an edict that the long-legged lad should be breeched; an epoch of life was complete. Wine Street with its freedom seemed good; but best of all was a visit to Grandmother Hill's pleasant house at Bedminster. "Here I had all wholesome liberty, all wholesome indulgence, all wholesome enjoyments; and the delight which I there learnt to take in rural sights and sounds has grown up with me, and continues un-

abated to this day." And now that scrambling process called education was to begin. A year was spent by Southey as a day-scholar with old Mr. Foot, a dissenting minister, whose unorthodoxy as to the doctrine of the Trinity was in some measure compensated by sound traditional views as to the uses of the cane. Mr. Foot, having given proof on the back of his last and his least pupil of steadfastness in the faith according to Busby, died; and it was decided that the boy should be placed under Thomas Flower, who kept school at Corston, nine miles from Bristol. To a tender mother's heart nine miles seemed a breadth of severance cruel as an Atlantic. Mrs. Southey, born to be happy herself, and to make others happy, had always heretofore met her son with a smile; now he found her weeping in her chamber; with an effort, such as Southey, man and boy, always knew how to make on like occasions, he gulped down his own rising sob, and tried to brighten her sorrow with a smile.

A boy's first night at school is usually not a time of mirth. The heart of the solitary little lad at Corston sank within him. A melancholy hung about the decayed mansion which had once known better days; the broken gateways, the summer-houses falling in ruins, the grass-grown court, the bleakness of the schoolroom, ill-disguised by its faded tapestry, depressed the spirits. Southey's pillow was wet with tears before he fell asleep. The master was at one with his surroundings; he too was a piece of worthy old humanity now decayed; he too was falling in untimely ruins. From the memory of happier days, from the troubles of his broken fortune, from the vexations of the drunken maid-servant who was now his wife, he took refuge in contemplating the order and motions of the stars. "When he came into his desk, even

there he was thinking of the stars, and looked as if he were out of humour, not from illnature, but because his calculations were interrupted." Naturally the work of the school, such as it was, fell for the most part into the hands of Charley, Thomas Flower's son. Both father and son knew the mystery of that flamboyant penmanship admired by our ancestors, but Southey's handwriting had not yet advanced from the early rounded to the decorated style. His spelling he could look back upon with pride; on one occasion a grand spelling tournament between the boys took place, and little Southey can hardly have failed to overthrow his taller adversaries with the posers, "crystallization" and "coterie." The household arrangements at Corston, as may be supposed, were not of the most perfect kind; Mrs. Flower had so deep an interest in her bottle, and poor Thomas Flower in his planets. The boys each morning washed themselves, or did not, in the brook ankle-deep which ran through the yard. In autumn the brook grew deeper and more swift, and after a gale it would bring within bounds a tribute of floating apples from the neighbouring orchard. That was a merry day, also in autumn, when the boys were employed to pelt the master's walnut-trees; Southey, too small to bear his part in the battery, would glean among the fallen leaves and twigs, inhaling the penetrating fragrance which ever after called up a vision of the brook, the hillside, and its trees. One school-boy sport—that of "conquering" with snail-shells—seems to have been the special invention of Corston. The snail-shells, not tenantless, were pressed point against point until one was broken in. A great conqueror was prodigiously prized, was treated with honourable distinction, and was not exposed to danger save in great emergencies. One who had slain his hundreds might

rank with Rodney, to see whom the boys had marched down to the Globe inn, and for whom they had cheered and waved their Sunday cocked hats as he passed by. So on the whole, life at Corston had its pleasures. Chief among its pains was the misery of Sunday evenings in winter; then the pupils were assembled in the hall to hear the master read a sermon, or a portion of Stackhouse's History of the Bible. "Here," writes Southey, "I sat at the end of a long form, in sight but not within feeling of the fire, my feet cold, my eyelids heavy as lead, and yet not daring to close them, kept awake by fear alone, in total inaction, and under the operation of a lecture more soporific than the strongest sleeping dose." While the boys' souls were thus provided for, there was a certain negligence in matters unspiritual; an alarm got abroad that infection was among them. This hastened the downfall of the school; one night disputing was heard between Charley and his father; in the morning poor Flower was not to be seen, and Charley appeared with a black eye. So came to an end the year at Corston. Southey, aged eight, was brought home and underwent "a three days' purgatory in brimstone."[1]

What Southey had gained of book-lore by his two years' schooling was as little as could be; but he was already a lover of literature after a fashion of his own. A friend of Miss Tyler had presented him, as soon as he could read, with a series of Newbery's sixpenny books for children—*Goody Twoshoes*, *Giles Gingerbread*, and the rest—delectable histories, resplendent in Dutch-gilt

[1] Recollections of Corston, somewhat in the manner of Goldsmith's Deserted Village, will be found in Southey's early poem, *The Retrospect*.

paper. The true masters of his imagination, however, were the players and playwrights who provided amusement for the pleasure-loving people of Bath. Miss Tyler was acquainted with Colman and Sheridan and Cumberland and Holcroft; her talk was of actors and authors, and her nephew soon perceived that, honoured as were both classes, the authors were awarded the higher place. His first dreams of literary fame accordingly were connected with the drama. "'It is the easiest thing in the world to write a play,' said I to Miss Palmer (a friend of Aunt Tyler's), as we were in a carriage on Redcliffe Hill one day, returning from Bristol to Bedminster. 'Is it, my dear?' was her reply. 'Yes,' I continued, 'for you know you have only to think what you would say if you were in the place of the characters, and to make them say it.'" With such a canon of dramatic authorship Southey began a play on the continence of Scipio, and actually completed an act and a half. Shakspere he read and read again; Beaumont and Fletcher he had gone through before he was eight years old. Were they not great theatrical names, Miss Tyler reasoned, and therefore improving writers for her nephew? and Southey had read them unharmed. When he visited his aunt from Corston, she was a guest with Miss Palmer at Bath; a covered passage led to the playhouse, and every evening the delighted child, seated between the two lady-patronesses of the stage, saw the pageantry and heard the poetry. A little later he persuaded a schoolfellow to write a tragedy; Ballard liked the suggestion, but could not invent a plot; Southey gave him a story; Ballard approved, but found a difficulty in devising names for the *dramatis personæ;* Southey supplied a list of heroic names; they were just what Ballard wanted—but he was at a loss to know what

the characters should say. "I made the same attempt," continues Southey, "with another schoolfellow, and with no better success. It seemed to me very odd that they should not be able to write plays as well as to do their lessons."

The ingenious Ballard was an ornament of the school of William Williams, whither Southey was sent as a day-boarder after the catastrophe of Corston. Under the care of this kindly, irascible, little, bewigged old Welshman, Southey remained during four years. Williams was not a model schoolmaster, but he was a man of character and of a certain humorous originality. In two things he believed with all the energy of his nature—in his own spelling-book printed for his own school, and in the Church Catechism. Latin was left to the curate; when Southey reached Virgil, old Williams, delighted with classical attainments rare among his pupils, thought of taking the boy into his own hands, but his little Latin had faded from his brain; and the curate himself seemed to have reached his term in the *Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi*, so that to Southey, driven round and round the pastoral paddock, the names of Tityrus and Melibœus became for ever after symbols of *ennui*. No prosody was taught; "I am," said Southey, "at this day as liable to make a false quantity as any Scotchman." The credit, however, is due to Williams of having discovered in his favourite pupil a writer of English prose. One day each boy of a certain standing was called upon to write a letter on any subject he pleased; never had Southey written a letter except the formal one dictated at Corston which began with "Honoured Parents"; he cried for perplexity and vexation; but Williams encouraged him, and presently a description of Stonehenge filled his

slate. The old man was surprised and delighted; a less amiable feeling possessed Southey's schoolfellows; a plan was forthwith laid for his humiliation—could he tell them, fine scholar that he was, what the letters *i. e.* stand for? Southey, never lacking in courage, drew a bow at a venture: for John the Evangelist.

The old Welshman, an original himself, had an odd following of friends and poor retainers. There was the crazy rhymester known as "Dr. Jones"; tradition darkly related that a dose of cantharides administered by waggish boys of a former generation had robbed him of his wits. "The most celebrated *improvisatore* was never half so vain of his talent as this queer creature, whose little figure of some five-feet-two I can perfectly call to mind, with his suit of rusty black, his more rusty wig, and his old cocked hat. Whenever he entered the school-room he was greeted with a shout of welcome." There was also Pullen the breeches-maker, a glorious fellow, brimful of vulgarity, prosperity, and boisterous good-nature; above all, an excellent hand at demanding a half-holiday. A more graceful presence, but a more fleeting, was that of Mrs. Estan, the actress, who came to learn from the dancing-master her *minuet de la cour* in The Belle's Stratagem. Southey himself had to submit to lessons in dancing; Tom Madge, his constant partner, had limbs that went every way; Southey's limbs would go no way; the spectacle presented by their joint endeavours was one designed for the pencil of Cruikshank. In the art of reading aloud Miss Tyler had herself instructed her nephew, probably after the manner of the most approved tragedy queens. The grand style did not please honest Williams. "Who taught you to read?" he asked scornfully. "My aunt," answered Southey. "Then give my compliments to your

aunt, and tell her that my old horse, that has been dead these twenty years, could have taught you as well"—a message which her nephew with the appalling frankness of youth delivered, and which was never forgotten.

While Southey was at Corston, his grandmother died; the old lady with the large, clear, brown, bright eyes, seated in her garden, was no more to be seen, and the Bedminster house, after a brief occupation by Miss Tyler, was sold. Miss Tyler spoke of Bristol society with a disdainful sniff; it was her choice to wander for a while from one genteel watering-place to another. When Williams gave Southey his first summer holidays, he visited his aunt at Weymouth. The hours spent there upon the beach were the most spiritual hours of Southey's boyhood; he was for the first time in face of the sea—the sea vast, voiceful, and mysterious. Another epoch-making event occurred about the same time; good Mrs. Dolignon, his aunt's friend, gave him a book—the first which became his very own since that present of the toy-books of Newbery. It was Hoole's translation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata;* in it a world of poetical adventure was opened to the boy. The notes to Tasso made frequent reference to Ariosto; Bull's Circulating Library at Bath—a Bodleian to Southey—supplied him with the version, also by Hoole, of the *Orlando Furioso;* here was a forest of old romance in which to lose himself. But a greater discovery was to come; searching the notes again, Southey found mention made of Spenser, and certain stanzas of Spenser's chief poem were quoted. "Was the *Faerie Queene* on Bull's shelves?" "Yes," was the answer, "they had it, but it was in obsolete language, and the young gentleman would not understand it." The young gentleman, who had already gone through

Beaumont and Fletcher, was not daunted; he fell to with the keenest relish, feeling in Spenser the presence of something which was lacking in the monotonous couplets of Hoole, and charming himself unaware with the music of the stanza. Spenser, "not more sweet than pure, and not more pure than wise,"

> High Priest of all the Muses' mysteries,[2]

was henceforth accepted by Southey as his master.

When Miss Tyler had exhausted her friends' hospitality, and had grown tired of lodgings, she settled in a pleasant suburban nook at Bristol; but having a standing quarrel with Thomas Southey, her sister's brother-in-law, she would never set foot in the house in Wine Street, and she tried to estrange her nephew, as far as possible, from his natural home. Her own brother William, a half-witted creature, she brought to live with her. "The Squire," as he was called, was hardly a responsible being, yet he had a sort of *half-saved* shrewdness, and a memory stored with old saws, which, says Southey, "would have qualified him, had he been born two centuries earlier, to have worn motley, and figured with a cap and bells and a bauble in some baron's hall." A saying of his, "Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost," was remembered by Southey in after-years, and when it was turned into Greek by Coleridge to serve as motto to *The Curse of Kehama*, a mysterious reference was given—Αποφθ. Ανεκ. του Γυλίελ. του Μητ. With much beer-swilling and tobacco-chewing, premature old age came upon him. He would sit for hours by the kitchen fire, or on warm days in the summer-house, his

[2] Carmen Nuptiale: Proem. 18.

eyes intently following the movements of the neighbours. He loved to play at marbles with his nephew, and at loo with Miss Tyler; most of all he loved to be taken to the theatre. The poor Squire had an affectionate heart; he would fondle children with tenderness, and at his mother's funeral his grief was overwhelming. A companion of his own age Southey found in Shadrach Weekes, the boy of all work, a brother of Miss Tyler's maid. Shad and his young master would scour the country in search of violet and cowslip roots, and the bee and fly orchis, until wood and rock by the side of the Avon had grown familiar and had grown dear; and now, instead of solitary pricking of play-bills, Southey set to work, with the help of Shad, to make and fit up such a theatre for puppets as would have been the pride even of Wilhelm Meister.

But fate had already pronounced that Southey was to be poet, and not player. Tasso and Ariosto and Spenser claimed him, or so he dreamed. By this time he had added to his epic cycle Pope's *Homer* and Mickle's *Lusiad*. That prose romance, embroidered with sixteenth-century affectations, but with a true chivalric sentiment at its heart, Sidney's *Arcadia*, was also known to him. He had read Arabian and mock-Arabian tales; he had spent the pocket-money of many weeks on a Josephus, and he had picked up from Goldsmith something of Greek and Roman history. So breathed upon by poetry, and so furnished with erudition, Southey, at twelve years old, found it the most natural thing in the world to become an epic poet. His removal from the old Welshman's school having been hastened by that terrible message which Miss Tyler could not forgive, Southey, before proceeding to Westminster, was placed for a year under a

clergyman, believed to be competent to carry his pupils beyond Tityrus and Melibœus. But, except some skill in writing English themes, little was gained from this new tutor. The year, however, was not lost. "I do not remember," Southey writes, "in any part of my life to have been so conscious of intellectual improvement . . . an improvement derived not from books or instruction, but from constantly exercising myself in English verse." "Arcadia" was the title of his first dream-poem; it was to be grafted upon the *Orlando Furioso*, with a new hero, and in a new scene; this dated from his ninth or tenth year, and some verses were actually composed. The epic of the Trojan Brutus and that of King Richard III. were soon laid aside, but several folio sheets of an *Egbert* came to be written. The boy's pride and ambition were solitary and shy; one day he found a lady, a visitor of Miss Tyler's, with the sacred sheets of *Egbert* in her hand; her compliments on his poem were deeply resented; and he determined henceforth to write his epics in a private cipher. Heroic epistles, translations from Latin poetry, satires, descriptive and moral pieces, a poem in dialogue exhibiting the story of the Trojan war, followed in rapid succession; last, a "Cassibelan," of which three books were completed. Southey, looking back on these attempts, notices their deficiency in plan, in construction. "It was long before I acquired this power —not fairly, indeed, till I was about five or six and thirty; and it was gained by practice, in the course of which I learnt to perceive wherein I was deficient."

One day in February, 1788, a carriage rumbled out of Bath, containing Miss Palmer, Miss Tyler, and Robert Southey, now a tall lank boy with high-poised head, brown curling hair, bright hazel eyes, and an expression of ardour

and energy about the lips and chin. The ladies were on their way to London for some weeks' diversion, and Robert Southey was on his way to school at Westminster. For a while he remained an inconvenient appendage of his aunt's, wearying of the great city, longing for Shad and the carpentry, and the Gloucester meadows and the Avon cliffs, and the honest eyes and joyous bark of poor Phillis. April the first—ominous morning—arrived; Southey was driven to Dean's Yard; his name was duly entered; his boarding-house determined; his tutor chosen; farewells were said, and he found himself in a strange world, alone.

CHAPTER II.

WESTMINSTER, OXFORD, PANTISOCRACY, AND MARRIAGE.

Of Southey during his four years at Westminster we know little; his fragment of autobiography, having brought him to the school, soon comes to an untimely close; and for this period we possess no letters. But we know that these were years which contributed much to form his intellect and character; we know that they were years of ardour and of toil; and it is certain that now, as heretofore, his advance was less dependent on what pastors and masters did for him than on what he did for himself. The highest scholarship—that which unites precision with breadth, and linguistic science with literary feeling—Southey never attained in any foreign tongue, except perhaps in the Portuguese and the Spanish. Whenever the choice lay between pausing to trace out a law of language, or pushing forward to secure a good armful of miscellaneous facts, Southey preferred the latter. With so many huge structures of his own in contemplation, he could not gather too much material nor gather it too quickly. Such fortitude as goes to make great scholars he possessed; his store of patience was inexhaustible; but he could be patient only in pursuit of his proper objects. He could never learn a language in regular fashion; the best grammar, he said, was always the shortest. Southey's acquaintance with

Greek never got beyond that stage at which Greek, like fairy gold, is apt to slip away of a sudden unless kept steadfastly in view; nearly all the Greek he had learnt at Westminster he forgot at Oxford. A monkish legend in Latin of the Church, or a mediæval Latin chronicle he could follow with the run of the eye; but had he at any season of his manhood been called on to write a page of Latin prose, it would probably have resembled the French in which he sometimes sportively addressed his friends by letter, and in which he uttered himself valiantly while travelling abroad.

Southey brought to Westminster an imagination stored with the marvels and the beauty of old romance. He left it skilled in the new sentiment of the time—a sentiment which found in Werther and Eloisa its dialect, high-pitched, self-conscious, rhapsodical, and not wholly real. His bias for history was already marked before he entered the school; but his knowledge consisted of a few clusters of historical facts grouped around the subjects of various projected epics, and dotting at wide distances and almost at random the vast expanse of time. Now he made acquaintance with that book which more than any other displays the breadth, the variety, and the interdependence of the visible lives of nations. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* leaves a reader cold who cares only to quicken his own inmost being by contact with what is most precious in man's spiritual history; one chapter of Augustine's Confessions, one sentence of the Imitation—each a live coal from off the altar—will be of more worth to such an one than all the mass and laboured majesty of Gibbon. But one who can gaze with a certain impersonal regard on the spectacle of the world will find the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, more than almost any other

single book, replenish and dilate the mind. In it Southey viewed for the first time the sweep, the splendour, the coils, the mighty movement of the stream of human affairs.

Southey's ambition on entering Westminster was to have the friendship of the youths who had acted in the last Westminster Play, and whose names he had seen in the newspaper. Vain hope! for they, already preparing to tie their hair in tails, were looking onward to the great world, and had no glance to cast on the unnoted figures of the under-fourth. The new-comer, according to a custom of the school, was for a time effaced, ceasing to exist as an individual entity, and being known only as "shadow" of the senior boy chosen to be "substance" to him during his noviciate. Southey accepted his effacement the more willingly because George Strachey, his substance, had a good face and a kindly heart; unluckily—Strachey boarding at home—they were parted each night. A mild young aristocrat, joining little with the others, was head of the house, and Southey, unprotected by his chief, stood exposed to the tyranny of a fellow-boarder bigger and brawnier than himself, who would souse the ears of his sleeping victim with water, or on occasions let fly the porter-pot or the poker at his head. Aspiring beyond these sallies to a larger and freer style of humour, he attempted one day to hang Southey out of an upper window by the leg; the pleasantry was taken ill by the smaller boy, who offered an effectual resistance, and soon obtained his remove to another chamber. Southey's mature judgment of boarding-school life was not on the whole favourable; yet to Westminster he owed two of his best and dearest possessions—the friendship of C. W. W. Wynn, whose

generous loyalty alone made it possible for Southey to pursue literature as his profession, and the friendship, no less precious, of Grosvenor Bedford, lasting green and fresh from boyhood until both were white-haired venerable men.

Southey's interest in boyish sports was too slight to beguile him from the sclitude needful for the growth of a poet's mind. He had thoughts of continuing Ovid's Metamorphoses; he planned six books to complete the Faery Queen, and actually wrote some cantos; already the subject of *Madoc* was chosen. And now a gigantic conception, which at a later time was to bear fruit in such poems as *Thalaba* and *Kehama*, formed itself in his mind. "When I was a schoolboy at Westminster," he writes, "I frequented the house of a schoolfellow who has continued till this day to be one of my most intimate and dearest friends. The house was so near Dean's Yard that it was hardly considered as being out of our prescribed bounds; and I had free access to the library, a well-stored and pleasant room. . . . . looking over the river. There many of my truant hours were delightfully spent in reading Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*. The book impressed my imagination strongly; and before I left school I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more prominent and poetical forms of mythology, which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of an heroic poem." Southey's huge design was begotten upon his *pia mater* by a folio in a library. A few years earlier Wordsworth, a boy of fourteen, walking between Hawkshead and Ambleside, noticed the boughs and leaves of an oak-tree intensely outlined in black against a bright western sky. "That moment," he says, "was important in my poetical history,

for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them; and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency." Two remarkable incidents in the history of English poetry, and each with something in it of a typical character.

At Westminster Southey obtained his first literary profits—the guerdon of the silver penny to which Cowper alludes in his *Table Talk*. Southey's penny—exchanged for current coin in the proportion of six to one by the mistress of the boarding-house—was always awarded for English composition. But his fame among his schoolfellows was not of an early or sudden growth. In the year of Southey's entrance, some of the senior boys commenced a weekly paper called The Trifler. It imitates, with some skill, the periodical essay of the post-Johnsonian period; there is the wide-ranging discussion on the Influence of Liberty on Genius, there is the sprightly sketch of Amelia a learned Lady, there is the moral diatribe on Deists, a Sect of Infidels most dangerous to Mankind, there are the letters from Numa and from Infelix, there is the Eastern apologue beginning, "In the city of Bassora lived Zaydor, the son of Al-Zored." Southey lost no time in sending to the editor his latest verses; a baby sister, Margaretta, had just died, and Southey expressed in elegy a grief which was real and keen. "The Elegy signed B. is received"—so Mr. Timothy Touchstone announced on the Saturday after the manuscript had been dropped into the penny post. The following Saturday—anxiously expected—brought no poem, but another announcement: "The Elegy by B. must undergo some Alterations; a Liberty I must request all my Correspondents

to permit me to take." "After this," says Southey, "I looked for its appearance anxiously but in vain." Happily no one sought to discover B., or supposed that he was one with the curly-headed boy of the under-fourth.

If authorship has its hours of disappointment, it has compensating moments of glory and of joy. The Trifler, having lived to the age of ten months, deceased. In 1792 Southey, now a great boy, with Strachey, his sometime "substance," and his friends Wynn and Bedford, planned a new periodical of ill-omened name, The Flagellant. "I well remember my feelings," he writes, "when the first number appeared. . . . . It was Bedford's writing, but that circumstance did not prevent me from feeling that I was that day borne into the world as an author, and if ever my head touched the stars while I walked upon the earth, it was then. . . . . In all London there was not so vain, so happy, so elated a creature as I was that day." From that starry altitude he soon descended. The subject of an early number of The Flagellant was flogging; the writer was Robert Southey. He was full of Gibbon at the time, and had caught some of Voltaire's manner of poignant irony. Rather for disport of his wits than in the character of a reformer, the writer of number five undertook to prove from the ancients and the Fathers that flogging was an invention of the Devil. During Southey's life the devil received many insults at his hands; his horns, his hoofs, his teeth, his tail, his moral character were painfully referred to; and the devil took it, like a sensible fiend, in good part. Not so Dr. Vincent; the preceptorial dignity was impugned by some unmannerly brat; a bulwark of the British Constitution was at stake. Dr. Vincent made haste to prosecute the publisher for libel. Matters having taken

unexpectedly so serious a turn, Southey came forward, avowed himself the writer, and with some sense of shame in yielding to resentment so unwarranted and so dull, he offered his apology. The head master's wrath still held on its way, and Southey was privately expelled.

All Southey's truant hours were not passed among folios adorned with strange sculptures. In those days even St. Peter's College, Westminster, could be no little landlocked bay—silent, secure, and dull. To be in London was to be among the tides and breakers of the world. Every post brought news of some startling or significant event. Now it was that George Washington had been elected first President of the American Republic; now that the States-General were assembled at Versailles; now that Paris, delivered from her night-mare towers of the Bastille, breathed free; now that Brissot was petitioning for dethronement. The main issues of the time were such as to try the spirits. Southey, who was aspiring, hopeful, and courageous, did not hesitate in choosing a side; a new dawn was opening for the world, and should not his heart have its portion in that dawn?

The love of our own household which surrounds us like the air, and which seems inevitable as our daily meat and drink, acquires a strange preciousness when we find that the world can be harsh. The expelled Westminster boy returned to Bristol, and faithful Aunt Tyler welcomed him home; Shad did not avert his face, and Phillis looked up at him with her soft spaniel eyes. But Bristol also had its troubles; the world had been too strong for the poor linen-draper in Wine Street; he had struggled to maintain his business, but without success; his fortune was now broken and his heart broke with it. In some respects it was well for Southey that his father's affairs

gave him definite realities to attend to, for in the quiet and vacancy of the days in Miss Tyler's house his heart took unusual heats and chills, and even his eager verse-writing could not allay the excitement nor avert the despondent fit. When Michaelmas came, Southey went up to Oxford to matriculate; it was intended that he should enter at Christ Church, but the dean had heard of the escapade at Westminster; there was a laying of big-wigs together over that adventure, and the young rebel was rejected; to be received, however, by Balliol College. But to Southey it mattered little at the time whether he were of this college or of that; a summons had reached him to hasten to Bristol that he might follow his father's body to the grave, and now his thoughts could not but cling to his mother in her sorrow and her need.

"I left Westminster," says Southey, "in a perilous state—a heart full of poetry and feeling, a head full of Rousseau and Werther, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon: many circumstances tended to give me a wrong bias, none to lead me right, except adversity, the wholesomest of all discipline." The young republican went up to chambers in Rat Castle—since departed—near the head of Balliol Grove, prepared to find in Oxford the seat of pedantry, prejudice, and aristocracy; an airy sense of his own enlightenment and emancipation possessed him. He has to learn to pay respect to men "remarkable only for great wigs and little wisdom." He finds it "rather disgraceful at the moment when Europe is on fire with freedom—when man and monarch are contending—to sit and study Euclid and Hugo Grotius." Beside the enthusiasm proper in Southey's nature, there was at this time an enthusiasm prepense. He had learnt from his foreign masters the language of hyper-sensibility;

his temperament was nervous and easily wrought upon; his spirit was generous and ardent. Like other youths with a facile literary talent before finding his true self, he created a number of artificial selves, who uttered for him his moralizings and philosophizings, who declaimed for him on liberty, who dictated long letters of sentimental platitudes, and who built up dream-fabrics of social and political reforms, chiefly for the pleasure of seeing how things might look in "the brilliant colours of fancy, nature, and Rousseau." In this there was no insincerity, though there was some unreality. "For life," he says, "I have really a very strong predilection," and the buoyant energy within him delayed the discovery of the bare facts of existence; it was so easy and enjoyable to become in turn sage, reformer, and enthusiast. Or perhaps we ought to say that all this time there was a real Robert Southey, strong, upright, ardent, simple; and although this was quite too plain a person to serve the purposes of epistolary literature, it was he who gave their cues to the various ideal personages. This at least may be affirmed—all Southey's unrealities were of a pure and generous cast; never was his life emptied of truth and meaning, and made in the deepest degree phantasmal by a secret shame lurking under a fair show. The youth Milton, with his grave upbringing, was happily not in the way of catching the trick of sentimental phrases; but even Milton at Cambridge, the lady of his College, was not more clean from spot or blemish than was Southey amid the vulgar riot and animalisms of young Oxford.

Two influences came to the aid of Southey's instinctive modesty, and confirmed him in all that was good. One was his friendship with Edmund Seward, too soon taken from him by death. The other was his discipleship to a

great master of conduct. One in our own day has acknowledged the largeness of his debt to

> That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
> Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
> Clear'd Rome of what most shamed him.

Epictetus came to Southey precisely when such a master was needed; other writers had affected him through his imagination, through his nervous sensibility; they had raised around him a luminous haze; they had plunged him deeper in illusion. Now was heard the voice of a conscience speaking to a conscience; the manner of speech was grave, unfigured, calm; above all it was real, and the words bore in upon the hearer's soul with a quiet resistlessness. He had allowed his sensitiveness to set up what excitements it might please in his whole moral frame; he had been squandering his emotions; he had been indulging in a luxury and waste of passion. Here was a tonic and a styptic. Had Southey been declamatory about freedom? The bondsman Epictetus spoke of freedom also, and of how it might be obtained. Epictetus, like Rousseau, told of a life according to nature; he commended simplicity of manners. But Rousseau's simplicity, notwithstanding that homage which he paid to the will, seemed to heat the atmosphere with strange passion, seemed to give rise to new curiosities and refinements of self-conscious emotion. Epictetus showed how life could be simplified indeed by bringing it into obedience to a perfect law. Instead of a quietism haunted by feverish dreams,—duty, action, co-operation with God. "Twelve years ago," wrote Southey in 1806, "I carried Epictetus in my pocket till my very heart was ingrained with it, as a pig's bones become red by feeding him

upon madder. And the longer I live, and the more I learn, the more am I convinced that Stoicism, properly understood, is the best and noblest of systems." Much that Southey gained from Stoicism he kept throughout his whole life, tempered, indeed, by the influences of a Christian faith, but not lost. He was no metaphysician, and a master who had placed metaphysics first and morals after would hardly have won him for a disciple; but a lofty ethical doctrine spoke to what was deepest and most real in his nature. To trust in an over-ruling Providence, to accept the disposal of events not in our own power with a strenuous loyalty to our Supreme Ruler, to hold loose by all earthly possessions even the dearest, to hold loose by life itself while putting it to fullest use—these lessons he first learnt from the Stoic slave, and he forgot none of them. But his chief lesson was the large one of self-regulation, that it is a man's prerogative to apply the reason and the will to the government of conduct and to the formation of character.

By the routine of lectures and examinations Southey profited little; he was not driven into active revolt, and that was all. His tutor, half a democrat, surprised him by praising America, and asserting the right of every country to model its own forms of government. He added, with a pleasing frankness which deserves to be imitated, "Mr. Southey, you won't learn anything by my lectures, sir; so, if you have any studies of your own, you had better pursue them." Of all the months of his life, those passed at Oxford, Southey declared, were the most unprofitable. "All I learnt was a little swimming . . . and a little boating . . . I never remember to have dreamt of Oxford,—a sure proof how little it entered into my moral being; of school, on the contrary, I dream

perpetually." The miscellaneous society of workers, idlers, dunces, bucks, men of muscle and men of money, did not please him; he lacked what Wordsworth calls "the congregating temper that pervades our unripe years." One or two friends he chose, and grappled them to his heart; above all, Seward, who abridged his hours of sleep for sake of study, whose drink was water, whose breakfast was dry bread; then, Wynn and Lightfoot. With Seward he sallied forth, in the Easter vacation, 1793, for a holiday excursion; passed with "the stupidity of a democratic philosopher," the very walls of Blenheim, without turning from the road to view the ducal palace; lingered at Evesham, and wandered through its ruined Abbey, indulging in some passable mediæval romancing; reached Worcester and Kidderminster. "We returned by Bewdley; there is an old mansion, once Lord Herbert's, now mouldering away, in so romantic a situation, that I soon lost myself in dreams of days of yore,—the tapestried room—the listed fight—the vassal-filled hall—the hospitable fire—the old baron and his young daughter—these formed a most delightful day-dream." The youthful democrat did not suspect that such day-dreams were treasonable—a hazardous caressing of the wily enchantress of the past; in his pocket he carried Milton's *Defence*, which may have been his amulet of salvation. Many and various elements could mingle in young brains a-seethe with revolution and romanticism. The fresh air and quickened blood at least put Southey into excellent spirits. "We must walk over Scotland; it will be an adventure to delight us all the remainder of our lives: we will wander over the hills of Morven, and mark the driving blast, perchance bestrodden by the spirit of Ossian!"

Among visitors to the Wye, in July, 1793, were William Wordsworth, recently returned from France, and Robert Southey, holiday-making from Oxford; they were probably unacquainted with each other at that time even by name. Wordsworth has left an undying memorial of his tour in the poem written near Tintern Abbey, five years later. Southey was drawing a long breath before he uttered himself in some thousands of blank verses. The father of his friend Bedford resided at Brixton Causeway, about four miles on the Surrey side of London; the smoke of the great city hung heavily beyond an intervening breadth of country; shady lanes led to the neighbouring villages; the garden was a sunny solitude where flowers opened and fruit grew mellow, and bees and birds were happy. Here Southey visited his friend; his nineteenth birthday came; on the following morning he planted himself at the desk in the garden summer-house; morning after morning quickly passed; and by the end of six weeks *Joan of Arc*, an epic poem in twelve books, was written. To the subject Southey was attracted primarily by the exalted character of his heroine; but apart from this it possessed a twofold interest for him—England in 1793 was engaged in a war against France, a war hateful to all who sympathized with the Republic; Southey's epic was a celebration of the glories of French patriotism, a narrative of victory over the invader. It was also chivalric and mediæval; the sentiment which was transforming the word Gothic, from a term of reproach to a word of vague yet mastering fascination, found expression in the young poet's treatment of the story of Joan of Arc. Knight and hermit, prince and prelate, doctors seraphic and irrefragable with their pupils, meet in it; the castle and the cathedral confront

one another: windows gleam with many-coloured light streaming through the rich robes of saint and prophet; a miracle of carven tracery branches overhead; upon the altar burns the mystic lamp.

The rough draft of *Joan* was hardly laid aside when Southey's sympathies with the revolutionary movement in France, strained already to the utmost point of tension, were fatally rent. All his faith, all his hope were given to the Girondin party, and from the Girondins he had singled out Brissot as his ideal of political courage, purity, and wisdom. Brissot, like himself, was a disciple of Jean Jacques; his life was austere; he had suffered on behalf of freedom. On the day when the Bastille was stormed, its keys were placed in Brissot's hands; it was Brissot who had determined that war should be declared against the foreign foes of the Republic. But now the Girondins—following hard upon Marie Antoinette—were in the death-carts; they chanted their last hymn of liberty, ever growing fainter while the axe lopped head after head; and Brissot was among the martyrs (Oct. 31, 1793). Probably no other public event so deeply affected Southey. "I am sick of the world," he writes, "and discontented with every one in it. The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties. . . . . I look round the world and everywhere find the same spectacle—the strong tyrannizing over the weak, man and beast. . . . . There is no place for virtue."

After this, though Southey did not lose faith in democratic principles, he averted his eyes for a time from France: how could he look to butchers who had shed blood which was the very life of liberty, for the realization of his dreams? And whither should he look? Had he but ten thousand republicans like himself, they might repeople

Greece and expel the Turk. Being but one, might not Cowley's fancy, a cottage in America, be transformed into a fact: "three rooms . . . . and my only companion some poor negro whom I have bought on purpose to emancipate"? Meanwhile he occupied a room in Aunt Tyler's house, and, instead of swinging the axe in some forest primeval, amused himself with splitting a wedge of oak in company with Shad, who might perhaps serve for the emancipated negro. Moreover, he was very diligently driving his quill: "I have finished transcribing *Joan*, and have bound her in marble paper with green ribbons, and am now copying all my remainables to carry to Oxford. Then once more a clear field, and then another epic poem, and then another." Appalling announcement! "I have accomplished a most arduous task, transcribing all my verses that appear worth the trouble, except letters; of these I took one list—another of my pile of stuff and nonsense—and a third of what I have burnt and lost; upon an average 10,000 verses are burnt and lost, the same number preserved, and 15,000 worthless." Such sad mechanic exercise dulled the ache in Southey's heart; still "the visions of futurity," he finds, "are dark and gloomy, and the only ray that enlivens the scene beams on America."

To Balliol Southey returned, and if the future of the world seemed perplexing, so also did his individual future. His school and college expenses were borne by Mrs. Southey's brother, the Rev. Herbert Hill, chaplain to the British Factory at Lisbon. In him the fatherless youth found one who was both a friend and a father. Holbein's portrait of Sir Thomas More in his best years, might have passed for that of Mr. Hill; there was the same benign thoughtfulness in his aspect, the same earnest

calm, the same brightness and quietness, the same serene and cheerful strength. He was generous and judicious, learned and modest, and his goodness carried authority with it. Uncle Hill's plan had been that Southey, like himself, should become an English clergyman. But though he might have preached from an Unitarian pulpit, Southey could not take upon himself the vows of a minister of the Church of England. It would have instantly relieved his mother had he entered into orders. He longed that this were possible, and went through many conflicts of mind, and not a little anguish. "God knows I would exchange every intellectual gift which He has blessed me with, for implicit faith to have been able to do this;" but it could not be. To bear the reproaches, gentle yet grave, of his uncle was hard; to grieve his mother was harder. Southey resolved to go to the anatomy school, and fit himself to be a doctor. But he could not overcome his strong repugnance to the dissecting-room; it expelled him whether he would or no; and all the time literature with still yet audible voice was summoning him. Might he not obtain some official employment in London, and also pursue his true calling? Beside the desire of pleasing his uncle, and of aiding his mother, the Stoic of twenty had now a stronger motive for seeking some immediate livelihood. "I shall joyfully bid adieu to Oxford," he writes, ". . . . and when I know my situation, unite myself to a woman whom I have long esteemed as a sister, and for whom I now indulge a warmer sentiment." But Southey's reputation as a dangerous Jacobin stood in his way; how could his Oxford overseers answer for the good behaviour of a youth who spoke scornfully of Pitt?

The shuttles of the fates now began to fly faster, and the threads to twist and twine. It was June of the year

1794. A visitor from Cambridge was one day introduced to Southey; he seemed to be of an age near his own; his hair, parted in the middle, fell wavy upon his neck; his face, when the brooding cloud was not upon him, was bright with an abundant promise—a promise vaguely told in lines of the sweet full lips, in the luminous eyes, and the forehead that was like a god's. This meeting of Southey and Coleridge was an event which decided much in the careers of both. In the summer days and in youth, the meeting-time of spirits, they were drawn close to one another. Both had confessions to make with many points in common; both were poets, both were democrats; both had hoped largely from France, and the hopes of both had been darkened; both were uncertain what part to take in life. We do not know whether Coleridge quickly grew so confidential as to tell of his recent adventure as Silas Titus Comberbatch of the 15th Light Dragoons. But we know that Coleridge had a lively admiration for the tall Oxford student, a person of distinction, so dignified, so courteous, so quick of apprehension, so full of knowledge, with a glance so rapid and piercing, with a smile so good and kind. And we know that Coleridge lost no time in communicating to Southey the hopes that were nearest to his heart.

Pantisocracy, word of magic, summed up these hopes. Was it not possible for a number of men like themselves, whose way of thinking was liberal, whose characters were tried and incorruptible, to join together and leave this old world of falling thrones and rival anarchies, for the woods and wilds of the young republic? One could wield an axe, another could guide a plough. Their wants would be simple and natural; their toil need not be such as the slaves of luxury endure;

where possessions were held in common, each would work for all; in their cottages the best books would have a place; literature and science, bathed anew in the invigorating stream of life and nature, could not but rise reanimated and purified. Each young man should take to himself a mild and lovely woman for his wife; it would be her part to prepare their innocent food, and tend their hardy and beautiful race. So they would bring back the patriarchal age, and in the sober evening of life they would behold "colonies of independence in the undivided dale of industry." All the arguments in favour of such a scheme could not be set forth in a conversation, but Coleridge, to silence objectors, would publish a quarto volume on Pantisocracy and Aspheterism.

Southey heartily assented; his own thoughts had, with a vague forefeeling, been pointing to America; the unpublished epic would serve to buy a spade, a plough, a few acres of ground; he could assuredly split timber; he knew a mild and lovely woman for whom he indulged a warmer sentiment than that of a brother. Robert Lovell, a quaker, an enthusiast, a poet, married to the sister of Southey's Edith, would surely join them; so would Burnett, his college friend, so perhaps would the admirable Seward. The long vacation was at hand; being unable to take orders, or to endure the horrors of the dissecting-room, Southey must no longer remain a burden upon his uncle; he would quit the university and prepare for the voyage.

Coleridge departed to tramp it through the romantic valleys and mountains of Wales. Southey joined his mother, who now lived at Bath, and her he soon persuaded—as a handsome and eloquent son can persuade a loving mother—that the plan of emigration was feasible;

she even consented to accompany her boy. But his Aunt —an *esprit borné*—was not to hear a breath of Pantisocracy; still less would it be prudent to confess to her his engagement to Miss Edith Fricker. His Edith was penniless, and therefore all the dearer to Southey; her father had been an unsuccessful manufacturer of sugar-pans. What would Miss Tyler, the friend of Lady Bateman, feel? What words, what gestures, what acts would give her feelings relief?

When Coleridge, after his Welsh wanderings, arrived in Bristol, he was introduced to Lovell, to Mrs. Lovell, to Mrs. Lovell's sisters, Edith and Sarah, and Martha and Elizabeth. Mrs. Lovell was doubtless already a pantisocrat; Southey had probably not found it difficult to convert Edith; Sarah, the elder sister, who was wont to look a mild reproof on over-daring speculations, seriously inclined to hear of pantisocracy from the lips of Coleridge. All members of the community were to be married. Coleridge now more than ever saw the propriety of that rule; he was prepared to yield obedience to it with the least possible delay. Burnett, also a pantisocrat, must also marry. Would Miss Martha Fricker join the community as Mrs. George Burnett? The lively little woman refused him scornfully; if he wanted a wife in a hurry, let him go elsewhere. The prospects of the reformers, this misadventure notwithstanding, from day to day grew brighter. "This Pantisocratic scheme," so writes Southey, "has given me new life, new hope, new energy; all the faculties of my mind are dilated." Coleridge met a friend of Priestley's. But a few days since he had toasted the great Doctor at Bala, thereby calling forth a sentiment from the loyal parish apothecary, "I gives a sentiment, gemmen! May all re-

publicans be gulloteened." The friend of Priestley's said that without doubt the doctor would join them. An American land-agent told them that for twelve men 2000*l.* would do. "He recommends the Susquehanna from its excessive beauty and its security from hostile Indians." The very name—Susquehanna—sounded as if it were the sweetest of rippling rivers. Money, it is true, as Southey admits, "is a huge evil;" but now they are twenty-seven, and by resolute men this difficulty can be overcome.

It was evening of the 17th of October, a dark and gusty evening of falling rain and miry ways. Within Aunt Tyler's house in College Green, Bristol, a storm was bursting; she had heard it all at last—Pantisocracy, America, Miss Fricker. Out of the house he must march; there was the door; let her never see his face again. Southey took his hat, looked for the last time in his life at his aunt, then stepped out into the darkness and the rain. "Why, sir, you ben't going to Bath at this time of night and in this weather?" remonstrated poor Shadrach. Even so; and with a friendly whisper master and man parted. Southey had not a penny in his pocket, and was lightly clad. At Lovell's he luckily found his father's great-coat; he swallowed a glass of brandy and set off on foot. Misery makes one acquainted with strange road-fellows; on the way he came upon an old man, drunk, and hardly able to stumble forward through the night: the young pantisocrat, mindful of his fellow-man, dragged him along nine miles amid rain and mire. Then, with weary feet, he reached Bath, and there was his mother to greet him with surprise, and to ask for explanations. "Oh, Patience, Patience, thou hast often helped poor Robert Southey, but never didst thou stand

him in more need than on Friday the 17th of October, 1794."

For a little longer the bow of hope shone in the West, somewhere over the Susquehanna, and then it gradually grew faint and faded. Money, that huge evil, sneered its cold negations. The chiefs consulted, and Southey proposed that a house and farm should be taken in Wales, where their principles might be acted out until better days enabled them to start upon their voyage. One pantisocrat, at least, could be happy with Edith, brown bread, and wild Welsh raspberries. But Coleridge objected; their principles could not be fairly tested under the disadvantage of an effete and adverse social state surrounding them; besides, where was the purchase-money to come from? how were they to live until the gathering of their first crops? It became clear that the realization of their plan must be postponed. The immediate problem was, How to raise 150*l.*? With such a sum they might both qualify by marriage for membership in the pantisocratical community. After that, the rest would somehow follow.

How, then, to raise 150*l.*? Might they not start a new magazine and become joint editors? The Telegraph had offered employment to Southey. "Hireling writer to a newspaper! 'Sdeath! 'tis an ugly title; but *n'importe.* I shall write truth and only truth." The offer, however, turned out to be that of a reporter's place; and his troublesome guest, honesty, prevented his contributing to The True Briton. But he and Coleridge could at least write poetry, and perhaps publish it with advantage to themselves; and they could lecture to a Bristol audience. With some skirmishing lectures on various political subjects of immediate interest Coleridge began;

many came to hear them, and the applause was loud. Thus encouraged, he announced and delivered two remarkable courses of lectures—one, A comparative view of the English Rebellion under Charles I. and the French Revolution; the other, On Revealed Religion, its Corruptions and its Political Views. Southey did not feel tempted to discuss the origin of evil or the principles of revolution. He chose as his subject a view of the course of European history from Solon and Lycurgus to the American War. His hearers were pleased by the graceful delivery and unassuming self-possession of the young lecturer, and were quick to recognize the unusual range of his knowledge, his just perception of facts, his ardour and energy of conviction. One lecture Coleridge begged permission to deliver in Southey's place—that on the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Roman Empire. Southey consented, and the room was thronged; but no lecturer appeared; they waited; still no lecturer. Southey offered an apology, and the crowd dispersed in no happy temper. It is likely, adds that good old gossip Cottle, who tells the story, "that at this very moment Mr. Coleridge might have been found at No. 48, College Street, composedly smoking his pipe, and lost in profound musings on his divine Susquehannah."

The good Cottle—young in 1795, a publisher, and unhappily a poet—rendered more important service to the two young men than that of smoothing down their ruffled tempers after this incident. Southey, in conjunction with Lovell, had already published a slender volume of verse. The pieces by Southey recall his schoolboy joys and sorrows, and tell of his mother's tears, his father's death, his friendship with "Urban," his love of "Ariste," lovely maid! his delight in old romance, his discipleship to

Rousseau. They are chiefly of interest as exhibiting the diverse literary influences to which a young writer of genius was exposed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Here the couplet of Pope reappears, and hard by the irregular ode as practised by Warton, the elegy as written by Gray, the unrhymed stanza which Collins's *Evening* made a fashion, the sonnet to which Bowles had lent a meditative grace, and the rhymeless measures imitated by Southey from Sayers, and afterwards made popular by his *Thalaba*. On the last page of this volume appear "Proposals for publishing by subscription *Joan of Arc*;" but subscriptions came slowly in. One evening Southey read for Cottle some books of *Joan*. "It can rarely happen," he writes, "that a young author should meet with a bookseller as inexperienced and as ardent as himself." Cottle offered to publish the poem in quarto, to make it the handsomest book ever printed in Bristol, to give the author fifty copies for his subscribers, and fifty pounds to put forthwith into his purse. Some dramatic attempts had recently been made by Southey, *Wat Tyler*, of which we shall hear more at a later date, and the *Fall of Robespierre*, undertaken by Coleridge, Lovell, and Southey, half in sport—each being pledged to produce an act in twenty-four hours. These were now forgotten, and all his energies were given to revising and in part recasting *Joan*. In six weeks his epic had been written; its revision occupied six months.

With summer came a great sorrow, and in the end of autumn a measureless joy. "He is dead," Southey writes, "my dear Edmund Seward! after six weeks' suffering. . . . . You know not, Grosvenor, how I loved poor Edmund: he taught me all that I have of good. . . . . There is a strange vacancy in my heart. . . . . I have

lost a friend, and such a one!" And then characteristically come the words: "I will try, by assiduous employment, to get rid of very melancholy thoughts." Another consolation Southey possessed: during his whole life he steadfastly believed that death is but the removal of a spirit from earth to heaven; and heaven for him meant a place where cheerful familiarity was natural, where perhaps he himself would write more epics and purchase more folios. As Baxter expected to meet among the saints above Mr. Hampden and Mr. Pym, so Southey counted upon the pleasure of having long talks with friends, of obtaining introductions to eminent strangers; above all, he looked forward to the joy of again embracing his beloved ones:—

> Often together have we talked of death;
> How sweet it were to see
> All doubtful things made clear;
> How sweet it were with powers
> Such as the Cherubim
> To view the depth of Heaven!
> O Edmund! thou hast first
> Begun the travel of eternity.

Autumn brought its happiness pure and deep. Mr. Hill had arrived from Lisbon; once again he urged his nephew to enter the church; but for one of Southey's opinions the church-gate "is perjury," nor does he even find church-going the best mode of spending his Sunday. He proposed to choose the law as his profession. But his uncle had heard of Pantisocracy, Aspheterism, and Miss Fricker, and said the law could wait; he should go abroad for six months, see Spain and Portugal, learn foreign languages, read foreign poetry and history, rummage among the books and manuscripts his uncle had col-

lected in Lisbon, and afterwards return to his Blackstone. Southey, straightforward in all else, in love became a Machiavel. To Spain and Portugal he would go; his mother wished it; Cottle expected from him a volume of travels; his uncle had but to name the day. Then he sought Edith and asked her to promise that before he departed she would become his wife; she wept to think that he was going, and yet persuaded him to go; consented finally to all that he proposed. But how was he to pay the marriage fees and buy the wedding-ring? Often this autumn he had walked the streets dinnerless, no pence in his pocket, no bread and cheese at his lodgings, thinking little, however, of dinner, for his head was full of poetry and his heart of love. Cottle lent him money for the ring and the licence—and Southey in after-years never forgot the kindness of his honest friend. He was to accompany his uncle, but Edith was first to be his own; so she may honourably accept from him whatever means he can furnish for her support. It was arranged with Cottle's sisters that she should live with them, and still call herself by her maiden name. On the morning of the 14th of November, 1795, a day sad, yet with happiness underlying all sadness, Robert Southey was married in Redcliffe Church, Bristol, to Edith Fricker. At the church door there was a pressure of hands, and they parted with full hearts, silently —Mrs. Southey to take up her abode in Bristol, with the wedding-ring upon her breast, her husband to cross the sea. Never did woman put her happiness in more loyal keeping.

So by love and by poetry, by Edith Fricker and by Joan of Arc, Southey's life was being shaped. Powers most benign leaned forward to brood over the coming years and to bless them. It was decreed that his heart

should be no homeless wanderer; that, as seasons went by, children should be in his arms and upon his knees; it was also decreed that he should become a strong toiler among books. Now Pantisocracy looked faint and far; the facts plain and enduring of the actual world took hold of his adult spirit. And Coleridge complained of this, and did not come to bid his friend farewell.

CHAPTER III.

WANDERINGS, 1795—1803.

THROUGH pastoral Somerset, through Devon amid falling leaves, then over rough Cornish roads, the coach brought Southey, cold, hungry, and dispirited, to Falmouth. No packet there for Corunna; no packet starting before December 1st. The gap of time looked colourless and dreary, nor could even the philosophy of Epictetus lift him quite above "the things independent of the will." After a comfortless and stormy voyage, on the fifth morning the sun shone, and through a mist the barren cliffs of Galicia, with breakers tumbling at their feet, rose in sight. Who has not experienced, when first he has touched a foreign soil, how nature purges the visual nerve with lucky euphrasy? The shadowy streets, the latticed houses, the fountains, the fragments of Moorish architecture, the Jewish faces of the men, the lustrous eyes of girls, the children gaily bedizened, the old witch-like women with brown shrivelled parchment for skin, told Southey that he was far from home. Nor at night was he permitted to forget his whereabouts; out of doors cats were uttering soft things in most vile Spanish; beneath his blanket, familiars, bloodthirsty as those of the Inquisition, made him their own. He was not sorry when the crazy coach, drawn by six mules, received him and his uncle, and the

journey eastward began to the shout of the muleteers and the clink of a hundred bells.

Some eighteen days were spent upon the road to Madrid. Had Southey not left half his life behind him in Bristol, those December days would have been almost wholly pleasurable. As it was they yielded a large possession for the inner eye, and gave his heart a hold upon this new land which, in a certain sense, became for ever after the land of his adoption. It was pleasant when having gone forward on foot he reached the crest of some mountain road, to look down on broken waters in the glen, and across to the little white-walled convent amid its chestnuts, and back to the dim ocean; there, on the summit, to rest with the odour of furze-blossoms and the tinkle of goats in the air, and while the mules wound up the long ascent to turn all this into hasty rhymes, ending with the thought of peace and love and Edith. Then the bells audibly approaching, and the loud-voiced muleteer consigning his struggling team to Saint Michael and three hundred devils; and then on to remoter hills, or moor and swamp, or the bridge flung across a ravine, or the path above a precipice with mist and moonlight below. And next day some walled city with its decaying towers and dim piazza, some church with its balcony of ghastly skulls, some abandoned castle, or jasper-pillared Moorish gateway and gallery. Nor were the little inns and baiting-houses without compensations for their manifold discomforts. The Spanish country-folk were dirty and ignorant, but they had a courtesy unknown to English peasants; Southey would join the group around the kitchen fire and be, as far as his imperfect speech allowed, one with the rustics, the carriers, the hostess, the children, the village barber, the familiar priest, and the familiar

pigs. When chambermaid Josepha took hold of his hair and gravely advised him never to tie it or to wear powder, she meant simple friendliness, no more. In his recoil from the dream of human perfectibility, Southey allowed himself at times to square accounts with common sense by a cynical outbreak; but in truth he was a warm-hearted lover of his kind. Even feudalism and Catholicism had not utterly degraded the Spaniard. Southey thanks God that the pride of chivalry is extinguished; his Protestant zeal becomes deep-dyed in presence of our Lady of Seven Sorrows and the Holy Napkin. "Here in the words of Mary Wollstonecraft," he writes, "'the serious folly of Superstition stares every man of sense in the face.'" Yet Spain has inherited tender and glorious memories; by the river Ezla he recalls Montemayor's wooing of his Diana; at Tordesillas he muses on the spot where Queen Joanna watched by her husband's corpse, and where Padilla, Martyr of Freedom, triumphed and endured. At length, the travellers, accompanied by Manuel, the most vivacious and accomplished of barbers, drew near Madrid, passed the miles of kneeling washerwomen and outspread clothes on the river banks, entered the city, put up at the Cruz de Malta, and were not ill-content to procure once more a well-cooked supper and a clean bed.

Southey pursued with ardour his study of the Spanish language, and could soon talk learnedly of its great writers. The national theatres, and the sorry spectacle of bullock-teasing, made a slighter impression upon him than did the cloisters of the new Franciscan Convent. He had been meditating his design of a series of poems to illustrate the mythologies of the world; here the whole portentous history of St. Francis was displayed upon the walls. "Do they believe all this, sir?" he asked Mr. Hill. "Yes, and

a great deal more of the same kind," was the reply. "My first thought was . . . . . here is a mythology not less wild and fanciful than any of those upon which my imagination was employed, and one which ought to be included in my ambitious design." Thus Southey's attention was drawn for the first time to the legendary and monastic history of the Church.

His Majesty of Spain, with his courtesans and his courtiers, possibly also with the Queen and her gallants, had gone westward to meet the Portuguese court upon the borders. As a matter of course, therefore, no traveller could hope to leave Madrid, every carriage, cart, horse, mule, and ass being embargoed for the royal service. The followers of the father of his people numbered seven thousand, and they advanced, devouring all before them, neither paying nor promising to pay, leaving a broad track behind as bare as that stripped by an army of locusts, with here a weeping cottager and there a smoking cork-tree for a memorial of their march. Ten days after the king's departure, Mr. Hill and his nephew succeeded in finding a buggy with two mules, and made their escape, taking with them their own larder. Their destination was Lisbon, and as they drew towards the royal party, the risk of embargo added a zest to travel hardly less piquant than that imparted by the neighbourhood of bandits. It was mid-January; the mountains shone with snow; but olive-gathering had begun in the plains; violets were in blossom, and in the air was a genial warmth. As they drove south and west, the younger traveller noted for his diary the first appearance of orange-trees, the first myrtle, the first fence of aloes. A pressure was on their spirits till Lisbon should be reached; they would not linger to watch the sad procession attending a body uncovered upon its bier;

they left behind the pilgrims to our Lady's Shrine, pious bacchanals half-naked and half drunk, advancing to the tune of bag-pipe and drum; then the gleam of waters before them, a rough two hours' passage, and the weary heads were on their pillows, to be roused before morning by an earthquake with its sudden trembling and cracking.

Life at Lisbon was not altogether after Southey's heart. His uncle's books and manuscripts were indeed a treasure to explore, but Mr. Hill lived in society as well as in his study, and thought it right to give his nephew the advantage of new acquaintances. What had the author of *Joan of Arc*, the husband of Edith Southey, the disciple of Rousseau, of Godwin, the Stoic, the tall, dark-eyed young man with a certain wildness of expression in his face, standing alone or discoursing earnestly on Industrial Communities of Women—what had he to do with the *inania regna* of the drawing-room? He cared not for cards nor for dancing; he possessed no gift for turning the leaves on the harpsichord, and saying the happy word at the right moment. Southey, indeed, knew as little as possible of music; and all through his life acted on the principle that the worthiest use of sound without sense had been long ago discovered by schoolboys let loose from their tasks; he loved to create a chaos of sheer noise after those hours during which silence had been interrupted only by the scraping of his pen. For the rest, the sallies of glee from a mountain brook, the piping of a thrush from the orchard-bough, would have delighted him more than all the trills of Sontag or the finest rapture of Malibran. It was with some of the superiority and seriousness of a philosopher just out of his teens that he unbent to the frivolities of the Lisbon drawing-rooms.

But if Lisbon had its vexations, the country, the climate,

the mountains with their streams and coolness, the odorous gardens, Tagus flashing in the sunlight, the rough bar glittering with white breakers, and the Atlantic, made amends. When April came, Mr. Hill moved to his house at Cintra, and the memories and sensations "felt in the blood and felt along the heart," which Southey brought with him to England, were especially associated with this delightful retreat. "Never was a house more completely secluded than my uncle's: it is so surrounded with lemon-trees and laurels as nowhere to be visible at the distance of ten yards. . . . . A little stream of water runs down the hill before the door, another door opens into a lemon-garden, and from the sitting-room we have just such a prospect over lemon-trees and laurels to an opposite hill as, by promising a better, invites us to walk. . . . . On one of the mountain eminences stands the Penha Convent, visible from the hills near Lisbon. On another are the ruins of a Moorish castle, and a cistern, within its boundaries, kept always full by a spring of purest water that rises in it. From this elevation the eye stretches over a bare and melancholy country to Lisbon on the one side, and on the other to the distant Convent of Mafra, the Atlantic bounding the greater part of the prospect. I never beheld a view that so effectually checked the wish of wandering."

"Lisbon, from which God grant me a speedy deliverance," is the heading of one of Southey's letters; but when the day came to look on Lisbon perhaps for the last time, his heart grew heavy with happy recollection. It was with no regretful feeling, however, that he leaped ashore, glad after all to exchange the sparkling Tagus and the lemon groves of Portugal for the mud-encumbered tide of Avon and a glimpse of British smoke. "I intend to write a

hymn," he says, "to the Dii Penates." His joy in reunion with his wife was made more rare and tender by finding her in sorrow; the grief was also peculiarly his own —Lovell was dead. He had been taken ill at Salisbury, and by his haste to reach his fireside had heightened the fever which hung upon him. Coleridge, writing to his friend Poole at this time, expresses himself with amiable but inactive piety: "The widow is calm, and amused with her beautiful infant. We are all become more religious than we were. God be ever praised for all things." Southey also writes characteristically: "Poor Lovell! I am in hopes of raising something for his widow by publishing his best pieces, if only enough to buy her a harpsichord. . . . Will you procure me some subscribers?" No idle conceit of serving her, for Mrs. Lovell with her child, as well as Mrs. Coleridge with her children, at a later time became members of the Southey household. Already—though Coleridge might resent it—Southey was willing to part with some vague enthusiams which wandered in the inane of a young man's fancy, for the sake of simple loyalties and manly tendernesses. No one was more boyish-hearted than Southey at fifty; but even at twenty-two it would not have been surprising to find grey hairs sprinkling the dark. "How does time mellow down our opinions! Little of that ardent enthusiasm which so lately fevered my whole character remains. I have contracted my sphere of action within the little circle of my own friends, and even my wishes seldom stray beyond it. . . . I want a little room to arrange my books in, and some Lares of my own." This domestic feeling was not a besotted contentment in narrow interests; no man was more deeply moved by the political changes in his own country, by the national uprising in

the Spanish peninsula, than Southey; while seated at his desk, his intellect ranged through dim centuries of the past. But his heart needed an abiding-place, and he yielded to the bonds—strict and dear—of duty and of love which bound his own life to the lives of others.

The ambitious quarto on which Cottle prided himself not a little was now published (1796). To assign its true place to *Joan of Arc* we must remember that narrative poetry in the eighteenth century was of the slenderest dimensions and the most modest temper. Poems of description and sentiment seemed to leave no place for poems of action and passion. Delicately finished cabinet pictures like Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* had superseded fresco. The only great English epic of that century is the prose Odyssey of which Mr. Tom Jones is the hero. That estimable London merchant, Glover, had indeed written an heroic poem containing the correct number of Books; its subject was a lofty one; the sentiments were generous, the language dignified; and inasmuch as Leonidas was a patriot and a whig, true whigs and patriots bought and praised the poem. But Glover's poetry lacks the informing breath of life. His second poem, *The Athenaid*, appeared after his death and its thirty books fell plumb into the water of oblivion. It looked as if the narrative poem *à longue haleine* was dead in English literature. Cowper had given breadth, with a mingled gaiety and gravity, to the poetry of description and sentiment; Burns had made the air tremulous with snatches of pure and thrilling song; the *Lyrical Ballads* were not yet. At this moment from a provincial press *Joan of Arc* was issued. As a piece of romantic narrative it belongs to the new age of poetry; in sentiment it is revolutionary and republican; its

garment of style is of the eighteenth century. Nowhere, except it be in the verses which hail "Inoculation, lovely Maid!" does the personified abstraction, galvanized into life by printer's type and poet's epithet, stalk more at large than in the unfortunate ninth book, the Vision of the Maid, which William Taylor of Norwich pronounced worthy of Dante. The critical reviews of the time were liberal in politics, and the poem was praised and bought. "Brissot murdered" was good, and "the blameless wife of Roland" atoned for some offences against taste; there was also that notable reference to the "Almighty people" who "from their tyrant's hand dashed down the iron rod." The delegated maid is a creature overflowing with Rousseauish sensibility; virtue, innocence, the peaceful cot, stand over against the wars and tyranny of kings, and the superstition and cruelty of prelates. Southey himself soon disrelished the youthful heats and violences of the poem; he valued it as the work which first lifted him into public view; and partly out of a kind of gratitude he rehandled the *Joan* again and again. It would furnish an instructive lesson to a young writer to note how its asperities were softened, its spasm subdued, its swelling words abated. Yet its chief interest will be perceived only by readers of the earlier text. To the second book Coleridge contributed some four hundred lines, where Platonic philosophy and protests against the Newtonian hypothesis of æther are not very appropriately brought into connexion with the shepherd-girl of Domremi. These lines disappeared from all editions after the first.[1]

[1] I find in a Catalogue of English Poetry, 1862, the following passage from an autograph letter of S. T. Coleridge, dated Bristol, July 16, 1814, then in Mr. Pickering's possession:—"I looked over the first five books of the 1st (Quarto) edition of

The neighbourhood of Bristol was for the present Southey's home. The quickening of his blood by the beauty, the air and sun of Southern Europe, the sense of power imparted by his achievement in poetry, the joy of reunion with his young wife, the joy also of solitude among rocks and woods, combined to throw him into a vivid and creative mood. His head was full of designs for tragedies, epics, novels, romances, tales—among the rest "my Oriental poem of The Destruction of the Dom Daniel." He has a "Helicon kind of dropsy" upon him; he had rather leave off eating than poetizing. He was also engaged in making the promised book of travel for Cottle; in what leisure time remained after these employments he scribbled for The Monthly Magazine, and to good purpose, for in eight months he had earned no less than "seven pounds and two pair of breeches," which, as he observes to his brother Tom, "is not amiss." He was resolved to be happy, and he was happy. Now, too, the foolish estrangement on Coleridge's part was brought to an end. Southey had been making some acquaintance with German literature at second hand. He had read Taylor's rendering of Bürger's *Lenore* and wondered who this William Taylor was; he had read Schiller's *Cabal and Love* in a wretched translation, finding the fifth act dreadfully affecting; he had

Joan of Arc yesterday, at Hood's request, in order to mark the lines written by me. I was really astonished—1, at the schoolboy wretched allegoric machinery—2, at the transmogrification of the fanatic Virago, into a modern Novel-pawing proselyte of the Age of Reason, a Tom Paine in petticoats, but so lovely! and in love more dear! '*On her rubied cheek hung pity's crystal gem*'—3, at the utter want of all rhythm in the verse, the monotony and the dead plumb down of the pauses, and of the absence of all bone, muscle, and sinew in the single lines."

also read Schiller's *Fiesco*. Coleridge was just back after a visit to Birmingham, but still held off from his brother-in-law and former friend. A sentence from Schiller, copied on a slip of paper by Southey, with a word or two of conciliation, was sent to the offended Abdiel of Pantisocracy: "Fiesco! Fiesco! thou leavest a void in my bosom, which the human race, thrice told, will never fill up." It did not take much to melt the faint resentment of Coleridge, and to open his liberal heart. An interview followed, and in an hour's time, as the story is told by Coleridge's nephew, "these two extraordinary youths were arm in arm again."

Seven pounds and two pair of breeches are not amiss, but pounds take to themselves wings, and fly away; a poet's wealth is commonly in the *paulo-post-futurum* tense; it therefore behoved Southey to proceed with his intended study of the law. By Christmas he would receive the first instalment of an annual allowance of 160*l.* promised by his generous friend Wynn upon coming of age; but Southey, who had just written his *Hymn to the Penates*—a poem of grave tenderness and sober beauty—knew that those deities are exact in their demand for the dues of fire and salt, for the firstlings of fruits, and for offerings of fine flour. A hundred and sixty pounds would not appease them. To London therefore he must go, and Blackstone must become his counsellor. But never did Sindbad suffer from the tyrannous old man between his shoulders as Robert Southey suffered from Blackstone. London in itself meant deprivation of all that he most cared for; he loved to shape his life in large and simple lines, and London seemed to scribble over his consciousness with distractions and intricacies. "My spirits always sink

when I approach it. Green fields are my delight. I am not only better in health, but even in heart, in the country." Some of his father's love of rural sights and sounds was in him, though hare-hunting was not an amusement of Southey the younger; he was as little of a sportsman as his friend Sir Thomas More; the only murderous sport indeed which Southey ever engaged in was that of pistol-shooting, with sand for ammunition, at the wasps in Bedford's garden when he needed a diversion from the wars of Talbot and the "missioned Maid." Two pleasures of a rare kind London offered, the presence of old friends, and the pursuit of old books upon the stalls. But not even for these best lures proposed by the Demon of the place would Southey renounce

> The genial influences
> And thoughts and feelings to be found where'er
> We breathe beneath the open sky, and see
> Earth's liberal bosom.

To London, however, he would go, and would read nine hours a day at law. Although he pleaded at times against his intended profession, Southey really made a strenuous effort to overcome his repugnance to legal studies, and for a while Blackstone and *Madoc* seemed to advance side by side. But the bent of his nature was strong. "I commit wilful murder on my own intellect," he writes two years later, "by drudging at law." And the worst or the best of it was that all his drudgery was useless. Southey's memory was of that serviceable sieve-like kind which retains everything needful to its possessor, and drops everything which is mere incumbrance. Every circumstance in the remotest degree connected with the seminary of magicians in the Dom

Daniel under the roots of the sea adhered to his memory, but how to proceed in the Court of Common Pleas was always just forgotten since yesterday. "I am not indolent; I loathe indolence; but, indeed, reading law is laborious indolence—it is thrashing straw. . . . I have given all possible attention and attempted to command volition; . . . close the book and all was gone." In 1801, there was a chance of Southey's visiting Sicily as secretary to some Italian Legation. "It is unfortunate," he writes to Bedford, "that you cannot come to the sacrifice of one law book—my whole proper stock—whom I design to take up to the top of Mount Etna, for the express purpose of throwing him straight to the devil. Huzza, Grosvenor! I was once afraid that I should have a deadly deal of law to forget whenever I had done with it; but my brains, God bless them, never received any, and I am as ignorant as heart could wish. The tares would not grow."

As spring advanced, impatience quickened within him; the craving for a lonely place in sight of something green became too strong. Why might not law be read in Hampshire under blue skies, and also poetry be written? Southey longed to fill his eyesight with the sea, and with sunsets over the sea; he longed to renew that delicious shock of plunging in salt waves which he had last enjoyed in the Atlantic at the foot of the glorious Arrabida mountain. Lodgings were found at Burton near Christ Church (1797), and here took place a little Southey family-gathering, for his mother joined them, and his brother Tom, the midshipman, just released from a French prison. Here too came Cottle, and there were talks about the new volume of shorter poems; here came Lloyd, the friend of Coleridge, himself a writer of verse, and with

Lloyd came Lamb, the play of whose letters show that he found in Southey not only a fellow-lover of quaint books, but also a ready smiler at quips and cranks and twinklings of sly absurdity. And here he found John Rickman, "the sturdiest of jovial companions," whose clear head and stout heart were at Southey's service whenever they were needed through all the future years.

When the holiday at Burton was at an end Southey had for a time no fixed abode. He is now to be seen roaming over the cliffs by the Avon, and now casting a glance across some book-stall near Gray's Inn. In these and subsequent visits to London he was wistful for home, and eager to hasten back. "At last, my dear Edith, I sit down to write to you in quiet and something like comfort. . . . My morning has been spent pleasantly, for it has been spent alone in the library; the hours so employed pass rapidly enough, but I grow more and more home-sick, like a spoilt child. On the 29th you may expect me. Term opens on the 26th; after eating my third dinner I can drive to the mail, and thirteen shillings will be well bestowed in bringing me home four-and-twenty hours earlier—it is not above sixpence an hour, Edith, and I would gladly purchase an hour at home now at a much higher price."

A visit to Norwich (1798) was pleasant and useful as widening the circle of his literary friends. Here Southey obtained an introduction to William Taylor, whose translations from the German had previously attracted his notice. Norwich at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present was a little Academe among provincial cities, where the *belles lettres* and mutual admiration were assiduously cultivated. Southey saw Norwich at its best. Among its "superior people" were

several who really deserved something better than that vague distinction. Chief among them was Dr. Sayers, whom the German critics compared to Gray, who had handled the Norse mythology in poetry, who created the English monodrama, and introduced the rhymeless measures followed by Southey. He rested too soon upon his well-earned reputation, contented himself with touching and retouching his verses, and possessing singularly pleasing manners, abounding information and genial wit, embellished and enjoyed society.[2] William Taylor, the biographer of Sayers, was a few years his junior. He was versed in Goethe, in Schiller, in the great Kotzebue —Shakspere's immediate successor, in Klopstock, in the fantastic ballad, in the new criticism, and all this at a time when German characters were as undecipherable to most Englishmen as Assyrian arrow-heads. The whirligig of time brought an odd revenge when Carlyle, thirty years later, hailed in Taylor the first example of "the natural-born English Philistine." In Norwich he was known as a model of filial virtue, a rising light of that illuminated city, a man whose extraordinary range pointed him out as the fit and proper person to be interrogated by any blue-stocking lady upon topics as remote as the domestic arrangements of the Chinese Emperor, Chim-Cham-Chow. William Taylor had a command of new and mysterious words; he shone in paradox, and would make ladies aghast by "defences of suicide, avowals that snuff alone had rescued him from it, information, given as certain, that 'God save the King' was sung by Jeremiah in the temple of Solomon,"[3] with other blasphemies borrowed from the German,

[2] See Southey's article on "Dr. Sayers's Works," Quarterly Review, Jan. 1827.

[3] Harriet Martineau: Autobiography, i. p. 300.

minor poems by various writers. The suggestion was well received by Southey, who became editor of such annual volumes for the years 1799 and 1800. At this period were produced many of the ballads and short pieces which are perhaps more generally known than any other of Southey's writings. He had served his apprenticeship to the craft and mystery of such verse-making in the Morning Post, earning thereby a guinea a week, but it was not until *Bishop Bruno* was written at Westbury that he had the luck to hit off the right tone, as he conceived it, of the modern ballad. The popularity of his *Mary the Maid of the Inn*, which unhappy children got by heart, and which some one even dramatized, was an affliction to its author, for he would rather have been remembered as a ballad writer in connexion with *Rudiger* and *Lord William*. What he has written in this kind certainly does not move the heart as with a trumpet, it does not bring with it the dim burden of sorrow which is laid upon the spirit by songs like those of Yarrow crooning of "old, unhappy far-off things." But to tell a tale of fantasy briefly, clearly, brightly, and at the same time with a certain heightening of imaginative touches, is no common achievement. The spectre of the murdered boy in *Lord William* shone upon by a sudden moonbeam, and surrounded by the welter of waves is more than a picturesque apparition; readers of goodwill may find him a very genuine little ghost, a stern and sad justicer. What has been named "the lyrical cry" is hard to find in any of Southey's shorter poems. In *Roderick* and elsewhere he takes delight in representing great moments of life when fates are decided, but such moments are usually represented as eminences on which will and passion wrestle in a mortal embrace, and if the cry of passion be heard, it is often

a half-stifled death cry. The best of Southey's shorter poems expressing personal feelings are those which sum up the virtue spread over seasons of life and long habitual moods. Sometimes he is simply sportive as a serious man released from thought and toil may be, and at such times the sportiveness, while genuine as a schoolboy's, is like a schoolboy's the reverse of keen-edged; on other occasions he expresses simply a strong man's endurance of sorrow; but more often an undertone of gravity appears through his glee, and in his sorrow there is something of solemn joy.

All this year (1799) *Madoc* was steadily advancing, and *The Destruction of the Dom Daniel* had been already sketched in outline. Southey was fortunate in finding an admirable listener. The Pneumatic Institution, established in Bristol by Dr. Beddoes, was now under the care of a youth lately an apothecary's apprentice at Penzance, a poet, but still more a philosopher, "a miraculous young man." "He is not yet twenty-one, nor has he applied to chemistry more than eighteen months, but he has advanced with such seven-leagued strides as to overtake everybody; his name is Davy"—Humphrey Davy—"the young chemist, the young everything, the man least ostentatious, of first talent that I have ever known." Southey would walk across from Westbury, an easy walk over beautiful ground, to breathe Davy's wonder-working gas, "which excites all possible mental and muscular energy, and induces almost a delirium of pleasurable sensations without any subsequent dejection." Pleased to find scientific proof that he possessed a poet's fine susceptibility, he records that the nitrous oxide wrought upon him more readily than upon any other of its votaries. "Oh, Tom!" he exclaims, gasping and ebullient, "Oh, Tom! such a

gas has Davy discovered, the gaseous oxyde! . . . Davy has actually invented a new pleasure for which language has no name. I am going for more this evening; it makes one strong and so happy! so gloriously happy! . . . Oh, excellent air-bag!" If Southey drew inspiration from Davy's air-bag, could Davy do less than lend his ear to Southey's epic? They would stroll back to Martin Hall—so christened because the birds who love delicate air built under its eaves their "pendant beds," —and in the large sitting-room, its recesses stored with books, or seated near the currant bushes in the garden, the tenant of Martin Hall would read aloud of Urien and Madoc and Cadwallon. When Davy had said good-bye, Southey would sit long in the window open to the west, poring on the fading glories of sunset, while about him the dew was cool, and the swallows' tiny shrieks of glee grew less frequent, until all was hushed and another day was done. And sometimes he would muse how all things that he needed for utter happiness were here,—all things —and then would rise an ardent desire—except a child.

Martin Hall was unhappily held on no long lease; its owner now required possession, and the Southeys with their household gods had reluctantly to bid it farewell. Another trouble, and a more formidable one, at the same time threatened. What with Annual Anthologies, Madoc in Wales, Madoc in Aztlan, the design for a great poem on the Deluge, for a Greek drama, for a Portuguese tragedy, for a martyrdom play of the reign of Queen Mary, what with reading Spanish, learning Dutch, translating and reviewing for the booksellers, Southey had been too closely at work. His heart began to take fits of sudden and violent pulsation; his sleep, ordinarily as sound as a child's, became broken and unrefreshing. Unless the disease were

thrown off by regular exercise, Beddoes assured him, it would fasten upon him and could not be overcome. Two years previously they had spent a summer at Burton in Hampshire; why should they not go there again? In June, 1799, unaccompanied by his wife, whose health seemed also to be impaired, Southey went to seek a house. Two cottages, convertible into one, with a garden, a fish-pond, and a pigeon-house, promised a term of quiet and comfort in "Southey Palace that is to be." Possession was not to be had until Michaelmas, and part of the intervening time was very enjoyably spent in roaming among the vales and woods, the coombes and cliffs of Devon. It was in some measure a renewal of the open-air delight which had been his at the Arrabida and Cintra. "I have seen the Valley of Stones," he writes: "Imagine a narrow vale between two ridges of hills somewhat steep; the southern hill turfed; the vale which runs from east to west covered with huge stones and fragments of stones among the fern that fills it; the northern ridge completely bare, excoriated of all turf and all soil, the very bones and skeleton of the earth; rock reclining upon rock, stone piled upon stone, a huge and terrific mass. A palace of the Preadamite kings, a city of the Anakim, must have appeared so shapeless and yet so like the ruins of what had been shaped, after the waters of the flood subsided. I ascended with some toil the highest point; two large stones inclining on each other formed a rude portal on the summit: here I sat down; a little level platform about two yards long lay before me, and then the eye fell immediately upon the sea, far, very far below. I never felt the sublimity of solitude before."

But Southey could not rest. "I had rather leave off eating than poetizing," he had said, and now the words

seemed coming true, for he still poetized and had almost ceased to eat. "Yesterday I finished *Madoc*, thank God! and thoroughly to my own satisfaction; but I have resolved on one great, laborious and radical alteration. It was my design to identify Madoc with Mango Capac, the legislator of Peru: in this I have totally failed, therefore Mango Capac is to be the hero of another poem." There is something charming in the logic of Southey's "therefore"; so excellent an epic hero must not go to waste; but when on the following morning he rose early it was to put on paper the first hundred lines not of Mango Capac, but of the Dom Daniel poem which we know as *Thalaba*. A *Mohammed* to be written in hexameters was also on the stocks; and Coleridge had promised the half of this. Southey, who remembered a certain quarto volume on Pantisocracy and other great unwritten works, including the last, a Life of Lessing, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, knew the worth of his collaborateur's promises. However it matters little; "the only inconvenience that his dereliction can occasion will be that I shall write the poem in fragments and have to seam them together at last." "My Mohammed will be what I believe the Arabian was in the beginning of his career, sincere in enthusiasm; and it would puzzle a casuist to distinguish between the belief of inspiration and actual enthusiasm." A short fragment of the *Mohammed* was actually written by Coleridge, and a short fragment by Southey, which dating from 1799, have an interest in connexion with the history of the English hexameter. Last among these many projects, Southey has made up his mind to undertake one great historical work, the History of Portugal. This was no dream-project; Mango Capac never descended from his father the Sun to appear in Southey's poem; Mohammed never emerged

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As spring advanced, impatience quickened within him; the craving for a lonely place in sight of something green became too strong. Why might not law be read in Hampshire under blue skies, and also poetry be written? Southey longed to fill his eyesight with the sea, and with sunsets over the sea; he longed to renew that delicious shock of plunging in salt waves which he had last enjoyed in the Atlantic at the foot of the glorious Arrabida mountain. Lodgings were found at Burton near Christ Church (1797), and here took place a little Southey family-gathering, for his mother joined them, and his brother Tom, the midshipman, just released from a French prison. Here too came Cottle, and there were talks about the new volume of shorter poems; here came Lloyd, the friend of Coleridge, himself a writer of verse, and with

Lloyd came Lamb, the play of whose letters show that he found in Southey not only a fellow-lover of quaint books, but also a ready smiler at quips and cranks and twinklings of sly absurdity. And here he found John Rickman, "the sturdiest of jovial companions," whose clear head and stout heart were at Southey's service whenever they were needed through all the future years.

When the holiday at Burton was at an end Southey had for a time no fixed abode. He is now to be seen roaming over the cliffs by the Avon, and now casting a glance across some book-stall near Gray's Inn. In these and subsequent visits to London he was wistful for home, and eager to hasten back. "At last, my dear Edith, I sit down to write to you in quiet and something like comfort. . . . My morning has been spent pleasantly, for it has been spent alone in the library; the hours so employed pass rapidly enough, but I grow more and more home-sick, like a spoilt child. On the 29th you may expect me. Term opens on the 26th; after eating my third dinner I can drive to the mail, and thirteen shillings will be well bestowed in bringing me home four-and-twenty hours earlier—it is not above sixpence an hour, Edith, and I would gladly purchase an hour at home now at a much higher price."

A visit to Norwich (1798) was pleasant and useful as widening the circle of his literary friends. Here Southey obtained an introduction to William Taylor, whose translations from the German had previously attracted his notice. Norwich at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present was a little Academe among provincial cities, where the *belles lettres* and mutual admiration were assiduously cultivated. Southey saw Norwich at its best. Among its "superior people" were

several who really deserved something better than that vague distinction. Chief among them was Dr. Sayers, whom the German critics compared to Gray, who had handled the Norse mythology in poetry, who created the English monodrama, and introduced the rhymeless measures followed by Southey. He rested too soon upon his well-earned reputation, contented himself with touching and retouching his verses, and possessing singularly pleasing manners, abounding information and genial wit, embellished and enjoyed society.[2] William Taylor, the biographer of Sayers, was a few years his junior. He was versed in Goethe, in Schiller, in the great Kotzebue —Shakspere's immediate successor, in Klopstock, in the fantastic ballad, in the new criticism, and all this at a time when German characters were as undecipherable to most Englishmen as Assyrian arrow-heads. The whirligig of time brought an odd revenge when Carlyle, thirty years later, hailed in Taylor the first example of "the natural-born English Philistine." In Norwich he was known as a model of filial virtue, a rising light of that illuminated city, a man whose extraordinary range pointed him out as the fit and proper person to be interrogated by any blue-stocking lady upon topics as remote as the domestic arrangements of the Chinese Emperor, Chim-Cham-Chow. William Taylor had a command of new and mysterious words; he shone in paradox, and would make ladies aghast by "defences of suicide, avowals that snuff alone had rescued him from it, information, given as certain, that 'God save the King' was sung by Jeremiah in the temple of Solomon,"[3] with other blasphemies borrowed from the German,

[2] See Southey's article on "Dr. Sayers's Works," Quarterly Review, Jan. 1827.

[3] Harriet Martineau: Autobiography, i. p. 300.

and too startling even for rationalistic Norwich. Dr. Enfield, from whose *Speaker* our fathers learnt to recite "My name is Norval," was no longer living; he had just departed in the odour of dilettantism. But solemn Dr. Alderson was here, and was now engaged in giving away his daughter Amelia to a divorced bridegroom, the painter Opie. Just now Elizabeth Gurney was listening in the Friends' Meeting-House to that discourse which transformed her from a gay haunter of country ball-rooms to the sister and servant of Newgate prisoners. The Martineaus also were of Norwich, and upon subsequent visits the author of *Thalaba* and *Kehama* was scrutinized by the keen eyes of a little girl—not born at the date of his first visit—who smiled somewhat too early and somewhat too maliciously at the airs and affectations of her native town, and whose pleasure in pricking a wind-bag, literary, political, or religious, was only over-exquisite. But Harriet Martineau, who honoured courage, purity, faithfulness, and strength, wherever they were found, reverenced the Tory Churchman, Robert Southey.[4]

Soon after his return from Norwich a small house was taken at Westbury (1798), a village two miles distant from Bristol. During twelve happy months this continued to be Southey's home. "I never before or since," he says in one of the prefaces to his collected poems, "produced so much poetry in the same space of time." William Taylor, by talks about Voss and the German idylls, had set Southey thinking of a series of English Eclogues; Taylor also expressed his wonder that some one of our poets had not undertaken what the French and Germans so long supported, an Almanack of the Muses, or Annual Anthology of

[4] See her "History of the Peace," B. vi. chap. xvi.

minor poems by various writers. The suggestion was well received by Southey, who became editor of such annual volumes for the years 1799 and 1800. At this period were produced many of the ballads and short pieces which are perhaps more generally known than any other of Southey's writings. He had served his apprenticeship to the craft and mystery of such verse-making in the Morning Post, earning thereby a guinea a week, but it was not until *Bishop Bruno* was written at Westbury that he had the luck to hit off the right tone, as he conceived it, of the modern ballad. The popularity of his *Mary the Maid of the Inn*, which unhappy children got by heart, and which some one even dramatized, was an affliction to its author, for he would rather have been remembered as a ballad writer in connexion with *Rudiger* and *Lord William*. What he has written in this kind certainly does not move the heart as with a trumpet, it does not bring with it the dim burden of sorrow which is laid upon the spirit by songs like those of Yarrow crooning of "old, unhappy far-off things." But to tell a tale of fantasy briefly, clearly, brightly, and at the same time with a certain heightening of imaginative touches, is no common achievement. The spectre of the murdered boy in *Lord William* shone upon by a sudden moonbeam, and surrounded by the welter of waves is more than a picturesque apparition; readers of goodwill may find him a very genuine little ghost, a stern and sad justicer. What has been named "the lyrical cry" is hard to find in any of Southey's shorter poems. In *Roderick* and elsewhere he takes delight in representing great moments of life when fates are decided, but such moments are usually represented as eminences on which will and passion wrestle in a mortal embrace, and if the cry of passion be heard, it is often

a half-stifled death cry. The best of Southey's shorter poems expressing personal feelings are those which sum up the virtue spread over seasons of life and long habitual moods. Sometimes he is simply sportive as a serious man released from thought and toil may be, and at such times the sportiveness, while genuine as a schoolboy's, is like a schoolboy's the reverse of keen-edged; on other occasions he expresses simply a strong man's endurance of sorrow; but more often an undertone of gravity appears through his glee, and in his sorrow there is something of solemn joy.

All this year (1799) *Madoc* was steadily advancing, and *The Destruction of the Dom Daniel* had been already sketched in outline. Southey was fortunate in finding an admirable listener. The Pneumatic Institution, established in Bristol by Dr. Beddoes, was now under the care of a youth lately an apothecary's apprentice at Penzance, a poet, but still more a philosopher, "a miraculous young man." "He is not yet twenty-one, nor has he applied to chemistry more than eighteen months, but he has advanced with such seven-leagued strides as to overtake everybody; his name is Davy"—Humphrey Davy—"the young chemist, the young everything, the man least ostentatious, of first talent that I have ever known." Southey would walk across from Westbury, an easy walk over beautiful ground, to breathe Davy's wonder-working gas, "which excites all possible mental and muscular energy, and induces almost a delirium of pleasurable sensations without any subsequent dejection." Pleased to find scientific proof that he possessed a poet's fine susceptibility, he records that the nitrous oxide wrought upon him more readily than upon any other of its votaries. "Oh, Tom!" he exclaims, gasping and ebullient, "Oh, Tom! such a

gas has Davy discovered, the gaseous oxyde! . . . Davy has actually invented a new pleasure for which language has no name. I am going for more this evening; it makes one strong and so happy! so gloriously happy! . . . Oh, excellent air-bag!" If Southey drew inspiration from Davy's air-bag, could Davy do less than lend his ear to Southey's epic? They would stroll back to Martin Hall—so christened because the birds who love delicate air built under its eaves their "pendant beds," —and in the large sitting-room, its recesses stored with books, or seated near the currant bushes in the garden, the tenant of Martin Hall would read aloud of Urien and Madoc and Cadwallon. When Davy had said good-bye, Southey would sit long in the window open to the west, poring on the fading glories of sunset, while about him the dew was cool, and the swallows' tiny shrieks of glee grew less frequent, until all was hushed and another day was done. And sometimes he would muse how all things that he needed for utter happiness were here,—all things —and then would rise an ardent desire—except a child.

Martin Hall was unhappily held on no long lease; its owner now required possession, and the Southeys with their household gods had reluctantly to bid it farewell. Another trouble, and a more formidable one, at the same time threatened. What with Annual Anthologies, Madoc in Wales, Madoc in Aztlan, the design for a great poem on the Deluge, for a Greek drama, for a Portuguese tragedy, for a martyrdom play of the reign of Queen Mary, what with reading Spanish, learning Dutch, translating and reviewing for the booksellers, Southey had been too closely at work. His heart began to take fits of sudden and violent pulsation; his sleep, ordinarily as sound as a child's, became broken and unrefreshing. Unless the disease were

thrown off by regular exercise, Beddoes assured him, it would fasten upon him and could not be overcome. Two years previously they had spent a summer at Burton in Hampshire; why should they not go there again? In June, 1799, unaccompanied by his wife, whose health seemed also to be impaired, Southey went to seek a house. Two cottages, convertible into one, with a garden, a fish-pond, and a pigeon-house, promised a term of quiet and comfort in "Southey Palace that is to be." Possession was not to be had until Michaelmas, and part of the intervening time was very enjoyably spent in roaming among the vales and woods, the coombes and cliffs of Devon. It was in some measure a renewal of the open-air delight which had been his at the Arrabida and Cintra. "I have seen the Valley of Stones," he writes: "Imagine a narrow vale between two ridges of hills somewhat steep; the southern hill turfed; the vale which runs from east to west covered with huge stones and fragments of stones among the fern that fills it; the northern ridge completely bare, excoriated of all turf and all soil, the very bones and skeleton of the earth; rock reclining upon rock, stone piled upon stone, a huge and terrific mass. A palace of the Preadamite kings, a city of the Anakim, must have appeared so shapeless and yet so like the ruins of what had been shaped, after the waters of the flood subsided. I ascended with some toil the highest point; two large stones inclining on each other formed a rude portal on the summit: here I sat down; a little level platform about two yards long lay before me, and then the eye fell immediately upon the sea, far, very far below. I never felt the sublimity of solitude before."

But Southey could not rest. "I had rather leave off eating than poetizing," he had said, and now the words

seemed coming true, for he still poetized and had almost ceased to eat. "Yesterday I finished *Madoc*, thank God! and thoroughly to my own satisfaction; but I have resolved on one great, laborious and radical alteration. It was my design to identify Madoc with Mango Capac, the legislator of Peru: in this I have totally failed, therefore Mango Capac is to be the hero of another poem." There is something charming in the logic of Southey's "therefore"; so excellent an epic hero must not go to waste; but when on the following morning he rose early it was to put on paper the first hundred lines not of Mango Capac, but of the Dom Daniel poem which we know as *Thalaba*. A *Mohammed* to be written in hexameters was also on the stocks; and Coleridge had promised the half of this. Southey, who remembered a certain quarto volume on Pantisocracy and other great unwritten works, including the last, a Life of Lessing, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, knew the worth of his collaborateur's promises. However it matters little; "the only inconvenience that his dereliction can occasion will be that I shall write the poem in fragments and have to seam them together at last." "My Mohammed will be what I believe the Arabian was in the beginning of his career, sincere in enthusiasm; and it would puzzle a casuist to distinguish between the belief of inspiration and actual enthusiasm." A short fragment of the *Mohammed* was actually written by Coleridge, and a short fragment by Southey, which dating from 1799, have an interest in connexion with the history of the English hexameter. Last among these many projects, Southey has made up his mind to undertake one great historical work, the History of Portugal. This was no dream-project; Mango Capac never descended from his father the Sun to appear in Southey's poem; Mohammed never emerged

from the cavern where the spider had spread his net; but the work which was meant to rival Gibbon's great history was in part achieved. It is a fact more pathetic than many others which make appeal for tears that this most ambitious and most cherished design of Southey's life, conceived at the age of twenty-six, and kept constantly in view through all his days of toil, was not yet half wrought out when forty years later the pen dropped from his hand, and the worn-out brain could think no more.

The deal shavings had hardly been cleared out of the twin-cottages at Burton, when Southey was prostrated by a nervous fever; on recovering he moved to Bristol, still weak, with strange pains about the heart, and sudden seizures of the head. An entire change of scene was obviously desirable. The sound of the brook that ran beside his uncle's door at Cintra, the scent of the lemon-groves, the grandeur of the Arrabida haunted his memory; there were books and manuscripts to be found in Portugal, which were essential in the preparation of his great history of that country. Mr. Hill invited him; his good friend Elmsley, an old schoolfellow, offered him a hundred pounds. From every point of view it seemed right and prudent to go. Ailing and unsettled as he was, he yet found strength and time to put his hand to a good work before leaving Bristol. Chatterton always interested Southey deeply; they had this much at least in common, that both had often listened to the chimes of St. Mary Redcliffe, that both were lovers of antiquity, both were rich in store of verse and lacked all other riches. Chatterton's sister, Mrs. Newton, and her child were needy and neglected. It occurred to Southey and Cottle that an edition of her brother's

poems might be published for her benefit. Subscribers came in slowly, and the plan underwent some alterations, but in the end the charitable thought bore fruit, and the sister and niece of the great unhappy boy were lifted into security and comfort. To have done something to appease the moody and indignant spirit of a dead poet was well; to have rescued from want a poor woman and her daughter was perhaps even better.

Early in April, 1800, Southey was once more on his way from Bristol by Falmouth to the Continent, accompanied by his wife, now about to be welcomed to Portugal by the fatherly uncle whose prudence she had once alarmed. The wind was adverse, and while the travellers were detained Southey strolled along the beach, caught soldier-crabs, and observed those sea-anemones which blossom anew in the verse of Thalaba. For reading on the voyage he had brought Burns, Coleridge's Poems, the Lyrical Ballads, and a poem, with "miraculous beauties," called *Gebir*, "written by God knows who." But when the ship lost sight of England, Southey with swimming head had little spirit left for wrestling with the intractable thews of Landor's early verse; he could just grunt out some crooked pun or quaint phrase in answer to inquiries as to how he did. Suddenly on the fourth morning came the announcement that a French cutter was bearing down upon them. Southey leaped to his feet, hurriedly removed his wife to a place of safety, and, musket in hand, took his post upon the quarter-deck. The smoke from the enemy's matches could be seen. She was hailed, answered in broken English, and passed on. A moment more, and the suspense was over; she was English, manned from Guernsey. "You will easily imagine," says Southey,

"that my sensations at the ending of the business were very definable—one honest simple joy that I was in a whole skin!" Two mornings more, and the sun rose behind the Berlings; the heights of Cintra became visible, and nearer, the silver dust of the breakers with sea-gulls sporting over them; a pilot's boat with puffed and flapping sail ran out; they passed thankfully our Lady of the Guide, and soon dropped anchor in the Tagus. An absence of four years had freshened every object to Southey's sense of seeing, and now he had the joy of viewing all familiar things as strange through so dear a companion's eyes.

Mr. Hill was presently on board with kindly greeting; he had hired a tiny house for them, perched well above the river, its little rooms cool with many doors and windows. Manuel the barber, brisk as Figaro, would be their factotum, and Mrs. Southey could also see a new maid, Maria Rosa. Maria by-and-by came to be looked at, in powder, straw-coloured gloves, fan, pink-ribands, muslin petticoat, green satin sleeves; she was "not one of the folk who sleep on straw mattresses;" withal she was young and clean. Mrs. Southey, who had liked little the prospect of being thrown abroad upon the world, was beginning to be reconciled to Portugal; roses and oranges, and green peas in early May were pleasant things. Then the streets were an unending spectacle; now a negro going by with Christ in a glass case to be kissed for a petty alms; now some picturesque, venerable beggar; now the little Emperor of the Holy Ghost, strutting it from Easter till Whitsuntide, a six-year-old mannikin with silk stockings, buckles, cocked hat and sword, his gentlemen ushers attending and his servants receiving donations on silver salvers. News of an assassination from time to time did

not much disturb the tranquil tenor of ordinary life. There were old gardens to loiter in along vine-trellised walks, or in sunshine where the grey lizards glanced and gleamed. And eastward from the city were lovely by-lanes amid blossoming olive-trees or market-gardens veined by tiny aqueducts and musical with the creak of water-wheels which told of cool refreshment. There was also the vast public aqueduct to visit; Edith Southey, holding her husband's hand, looked down, hardly discovering the diminished figures below of women washing in the brook of Alcantara. If the sultry noon in Lisbon was hard to endure, evening made amends; then strong sea-winds swept the narrowest alley, and rolled their current down every avenue. And later, it was pure content to look down upon the moonlighted river, with Almada stretching its black isthmus into the waters that shone like midnight snow.

Before moving to Cintra, they wished to witness the procession of the Body of God—Southey likes the English words as exposing "the naked nonsense of the blasphemy"—those of St. Anthony, and the Heart of Jesus, and the first bull-fight. Everything had grown into one insufferable glare; the very dust was bleached, the light was like the quivering of a furnace fire. Every man and beast was asleep; the stone-cutter slept with his head upon the stone; the dog slept under the very cart-wheels; the bells alone slept not nor ceased from their importunate clamour. At length—it was near mid June—a marvellous cleaning of streets took place, the houses were hung with crimson damask, soldiers came and lined the ways, windows and balconies filled with impatient watchers, not a jewel in Lisbon but was on show. With blare of music the procession began; first, the banners of the city and

its trades, the clumsy bearers crab-sidling along; an armed champion carrying a flag; wooden St. George held painfully on horseback; led horses, their saddles covered with rich escutcheons; all the brotherhoods, an immense train of men in red or grey cloaks; the knights of the orders superbly dressed; the whole patriarchal church in glorious robes; and then, amid a shower of rose-leaves fluttering from the windows, the Pix, and after the Pix, the Prince. On a broiling Sunday, the amusement being cool and devout, was celebrated the bull-feast. The first wound sickened Edith; Southey himself, not without an effort, looked on and saw "the death-sweat darkening the dun hide," a circumstance borne in mind for his *Thalaba*. "I am not quite sure," he writes, "that my curiosity in once going was perfectly justifiable, but the pain inflicted by the sight was expiation enough."

After this it was high time to take refuge from the sun among the lemon-groves at Cintra. Here, if ever in his life, Southey for a brief season believed that the grasshopper is wiser than the ant; a true Portuguese indolence overpowered him. "I have spent my mornings half naked in a wet room dozing upon the bed, my right hand not daring to touch my left." Such glorious indolence could only be a brief possession with Southey. More often he would wander by the streams to those spots where purple crocuses carpeted the ground, and there rest and read. Sometimes seated sideways on one of the surefooted *burros*, with a boy to beat and guide the brute, he would jog lazily on while Edith, now skilled in "asswomanship," would jog along on a brother donkey. Once and again a fog—not unwelcome—came rolling in from the ocean, one huge mass of mist, marching through the valley like a victorious army, approaching, blotting the

brightness, but leaving all dank and fresh. And always the evenings were delightful, when fireflies sparkled under the trees, or in July and August as their light went out, when the grillo began his song. "I eat oranges, figs, and delicious pears—drink Colares wine, a sort of half-way excellence between port and claret—read all I can lay my hands on—dream of poem after poem, and play after play—take a siesta of two hours, and am as happy as if life were but one everlasting to-day, and that to-morrow was not to be provided for."

But Southey's second visit to Portugal was on the whole no season of repose. A week in the southern climate seemed to have restored him to health, and he assailed folio after folio in his uncle's library, rising each morning at five, "to lay in bricks for the great Pyramid of my history." The chronicles, the laws, the poetry of Portugal were among these bricks. Nor did he slacken in his ardour as a writer of verse. Six books of *Thalaba* were in his trunk in manuscript when he sailed from Falmouth; the remaining six were of a southern birth. "I am busy," he says, "in correcting *Thalaba* for the press . . . . It is a good job done, and so I have thought of another, and another, and another." As with *Joan of Arc*, so with this maturer poem the correction was a rehandling which doubled the writer's work. To draw the pen across six hundred lines did not cost him a pang. At length the manuscript was despatched to his friend Rickman, with instructions to make as good a bargain as he could for the first thousand copies. By *Joan* and the miscellaneous *Poems* of 1797, Southey had gained not far from a hundred and fifty pounds; he might fairly expect a hundred guineas for *Thalaba*. It would buy the furniture of his long-expected house. But he was concerned

about the prospects of Harry, his younger brother; and now William Taylor wrote that some provincial surgeon of eminence would board and instruct the lad during four or five years for precisely a hundred guineas. "A hundred guineas!" Southey exclaims, "well, but thank God, there is *Thalaba* ready, for which I ask this sum." "*Thalaba* finished, all my poetry," he writes, "instead of being wasted in rivulets and ditches, shall flow into the great Madoc Mississippi river." One epic poem, however, he finds too little to content him; already *The Curse of Kehama* is in his head, and another of the mythological series which never saw the light. "I have some distant view of manufacturing a Hindoo romance, wild as *Thalaba;* and a nearer one of a Persian story, of which I see the germ of vitality. I take the system of the Zendavesta for my mythology, and introduce the powers of darkness persecuting a Persian, one of the hundred and fifty sons of the great king; an Athenian captive is a prominent character, and the whole warfare of the evil power ends in exalting a Persian prince into a citizen of Athens." From which catastrophe we may infer that Southey had still something republican about his heart.

Before quitting Portugal the Southeys, with their friend Waterhouse and a party of ladies, travelled northwards, encountering very gallantly the trials of the way; Mafra, its convent and library, had been already visited by Southey. "Do you love reading?" asked the friar who accompanied them, overhearing some remark about the books. "Yes." "And I," said the honest Franciscan, "love eating and drinking." At Coimbra—that central point from which radiates the history and literature of Portugal—Southey would have agreed feelingly with the good brother of the Mafra convent; he had looked forward

to precious moments of emotion in that venerable city; but air and exercise had given him a cruel appetite; if truth must be told, the ducks of the monastic poultry-yard were more to him than the precious finger of St. Anthony. "I *did* long," he confesses, "to buy, beg, or steal a dinner." The dinner must somehow have been secured before he could approach in a worthy spirit that most affecting monument at Coimbra—the Fountain of Tears. "It is the spot where Inez de Castro was accustomed to meet her husband Pedro, and weep for him in his absence. Certainly her dwelling-house was in the adjoining garden; and from there she was dragged, to be murdered at the feet of the king, her father-in-law. . . . . I who have long planned a tragedy upon the subject, stood upon my own scene." While Southey and his companions gazed at the fountains and their shadowing cedar-trees, the gownsmen gathered round; the visitors were travel-stained and bronzed by the sun; perhaps the witty youths cheered for the lady with the squaw tint; whatever offence may have been given, the ladies' protectors found them "impudent blackguards," and with difficulty suppressed pugilistic risings.

After an excursion southwards to Algarve, Southey made ready for his return to England (1801). His wife desired it, and he had attained the main objects of his sojourn abroad. His health had never been more robust; he had read widely; he had gathered large material for his History; he knew where to put his hand on this or that which might prove needful, whenever he should return to complete his work among the libraries of Portugal. On arriving at Bristol, a letter from Coleridge met him. It was dated from Greta Hall, Keswick, and after reminding Southey that Bristol had recently lost the miraculous

young man, Davy, and adding that he, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, had experiences, sufferings, hopes, projects to impart, which would beguile much time, "were you on a desert island and I your *Friday*," it went on to present the attractions of Keswick, and in particular of Greta Hall, in a way which could not be resisted. Taking all in all, the beauty of the prospect, the roominess of the house, the lowness of the rent, the unparalleled merits of the landlord, the neighbourhood of noble libraries, it united advantages not to be found together elsewhere. "In short,"—the appeal wound up,—"for situation and convenience—and when I mention the name of Wordsworth, for society of men of intellect—I know no place in which you and Edith would find yourselves so well suited."

Meanwhile Drummond, an M.P. and a translator of Persius, who was going as ambassador first to Palermo and then to Constantinople, was on the look-out for a secretary. The post would be obtained for Southey by his friend Wynn, if possible; this might lead to a consulship, why not to the consulship at Lisbon with 1000*l.* a year? Such possibilities, however, could not prevent him from speedily visiting Coleridge and Keswick. "Time and absence make strange work with our affections," so writes Southey; "but mine are ever returning to rest upon you. I have other and dear friends, but none with whom the whole of my being is intimate. . . . . Oh! I have yet such dreams. Is it quite clear that you and I were not meant for some better star, and dropped by mistake into this world of pounds, shillings, and pence?" So for the first time Southey set foot in Keswick, and looked upon the lake and the hills which were to become a portion of his being, and which have taken him so closely, so tenderly to themselves. His first feeling was one not precisely of disap-

pointment, but certainly of remoteness from this northern landscape; he had not yet come out from the glow and the noble *abandon* of the South. "These lakes," he says, "are like rivers; but oh for the Mondego and the Tagus! And these mountains beautifully indeed are they shaped and grouped; but oh for the grand Monchique! and for Cintra my paradise!"

Time alone was needed to calm and temper his sense of seeing, for when, leaving Mrs. Southey with her sister and Coleridge, he visited his friend Wynn at Llangedwin, and breathed the mountain air of his own Prince Madoc, all the loveliness of Welsh streams and rivers sank into his soul. "The Dee is broad and shallow, and its dark waters shiver into white and silver and hues of amber brown. No mud upon the shore—no bushes—no marsh plants—anywhere a child might stand dry-footed and dip his hand into the water." And again a contrasted picture: "The mountain-side was stony and a few trees grew among its stones; the other side was more wooded, and had grass on the top, and a huge waterfall thundered into the bottom, and thundered down the bottom. When it had nearly passed these rocky straits, it met another stream. The width of water then became considerable, and twice it formed a large black pool, to the eye absolutely stagnant, the froth of the waters that entered there sleeping upon the surface; it had the deadness of enchantment; yet was not the pool wider than the river above it and below it, where it foamed over and fell." Such free delight as Southey had among the hills of Wales came quickly to an end. A letter was received offering him the position of private secretary to Mr. Corry, Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland, with a salary of four hundred pounds a year. Rickman was in Dublin and this was Rickman's

doing. Southey, as he was in prudence bound to do, accepted the appointment, hastened back to Keswick, bade farewell for a little while to his wife, and started for Dublin in no cheerful frame of mind.

At a later time, Southey possessed Irish friends whom he honoured and loved; he has written wise and humane words about the Irish people. But all through his career Ireland was to Southey somewhat too much that ideal country—of late to be found only in the region of humorous-pathetic melodrama—in which the business of life is carried on mainly by the agency of bulls and blunderbusses; and it required a distinct effort on his part to conceive the average Teague or Patrick otherwise than as a potato-devouring troglodyte, on occasions grotesquely amiable, but more often with the rage of Popery working in his misproportioned features. Those hours during which Southey waited for the packet were among the heaviest of his existence. After weary tackings in a baffling wind, the ship was caught into a gale, and was whirled away, fifteen miles north of Dublin to the fishing-town of Balbriggan. Then, a drive across desolate country, which would have depressed the spirits had it not been enlivened by the airs and humours of little Dr. Solomon, the unique, the omniscient, the garrulous, next after Bonaparte the most illustrious of mortals, inventor of the Cordial Balm of Gilead, and possessor of a hundred puncheons of rum. When the new private secretary arrived, the chancellor was absent; the secretary therefore set to work on rebuilding a portion of his *Madoc*. Presently Mr. Corry appeared, and there was a bow and a shake of hands; then he hurried away to London, to be followed by Southey, who going round by Keswick was there joined by his wife. From London Southey writes to Rick-

man, "The chancellor and the scribe go on in the same way. The scribe hath made out a catalogue of all books published since the commencement of '97 upon finance and scarcity; he hath also copied a paper written by J. R. [John Rickman] containing some Irish alderman's hints about oak-bark; and nothing more hath the scribe done in his vocation. Duly he calls at the chancellor's door; sometimes he is admitted to immediate audience; sometimes kicketh his heels in the antechamber; . . . . sometimes a gracious message emancipates him for the day. Secrecy hath been enjoined him as to these state proceedings. On three subjects he is directed to read and research—corn-laws, finance, tythes, according to their written order." The independent journals meanwhile had compared Corry and Southey, the two state conspirators, to Empson and Dudley; and delicately expressed a hope that the poet would make no false *numbers* in his new work.

Southey, who had already worn an ass's head in one of Gillray's caricatures, was not afflicted by the newspaper sarcasm; but the vacuity of such a life was intolerable, and when it was proposed that he should become tutor to Corry's son, he brought his mind finally to the point of resigning "a foolish office and a good salary." His notions of competence were moderate; the vagabondage between the Irish and English headquarters entailed by his office was irksome. His books were accumulating, and there was ample work to be done among them if he had but a quiet library of his own. Then, too, there was another good reason for resigning. A new future was opening for Southey. Early in the year (1802) his mother died; she had come to London to be with her son; there she had been stricken with mortal illness; true

to her happy self-forgetful instincts, she remained calm, uncomplaining, considerate for others. "Go down, my dear; I shall sleep presently," she had said, knowing that death was at hand. With his mother, the last friend of Southey's infancy and childhood was gone. "I calmed and curbed myself," he writes, "and forced myself to employment; but, at night, there was no sound of feet in her bed-room, to which I had been used to listen, and in the morning it was not my first business to see her." The past was past indeed. But as the year opened, it brought a happy promise; before summer would end, a child might be in his arms. Here were sufficient reasons for his resignation; a library and a nursery ought, he says, to be stationary.

To Bristol husband and wife came, and there found a small furnished house. After the roar of Fleet Street, and the gathering of distinguished men—Fuseli, Flaxman, Barry, Lamb, Campbell, Bowles—there was a strangeness in the great quiet of the place. But in that quiet Southey could observe each day the growth of the pile of manuscript containing his version of *Amadis of Gaul*, for which Longman and Rees promised him a munificent sixty pounds. He toiled at his History of Portugal, finding matter of special interest in that part which was concerned with the religious orders. He received from his Lisbon collection precious boxes folio-crammed. "My dear and noble books! Such folios of saints! dull books enough for my patience to diet upon, till all my flock be gathered together into one fold." Sixteen volumes of Spanish poetry are lying uncut in the next room; a folio yet untasted jogs his elbow; two of the best and rarest chronicles coyly invite him. He had books enough in England to employ three years of active industry. And underlying

all thoughts of the great Constable Nuño Alvares Pereyra, of the King D. Joaõ I., and of the Cid, deeper than the sportsman pleasure of hunting from their lair strange facts about the orders Cistercian, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit, there was a thought of that new-comer whom, says Southey, "I already feel disposed to call whelp and dog, and all those vocables of vituperation by which a man loves to call those he loves best."

In September, 1802, was born Southey's first child named Margaret Edith, after her mother and her dead grandmother; a flat-nosed, round-foreheaded, grey-eyed, good-humoured girl. "I call Margaret," he says in a sober mood of fatherly happiness, "by way of avoiding all commonplace phraseology of endearment, a worthy child and a most excellent character. She loves me better than any one except her mother; her eyes are as quick as thought, she is all life and spirit, and as happy as the day is long; but that little brain of hers is never at rest, and it is painful to see how dreams disturb her." For Margery and her mother and the folios a habitation must be found. Southey inclined now towards settling in the neighbourhood of London—now towards Norwich, where Dr. Sayers and William Taylor would welcome him, now towards Keswick; but its horrid latitude, its incessant rains! On the whole his heart turned most fondly to Wales; and there, in one of the loveliest spots of Great Britain, in the Vale of Neath, was a house to let, by name Maes Gwyn. Southey gave his fancy the rein, and pictured himself "housed and homed" in Maes Gwyn, working steadily at the History of Portugal, and now and again glancing away from his work to have a look at Margery seated in her little great chair. But it was never to be; a difference with the landlord brought to an end his treaty for the

house, and in August the child lay dying. It was bitter to part with what had been so long desired—during seven childless years—and what had grown so dear. But Southey's heart was strong; he drew himself together, returned to his toil, now less joyous than before, and set himself to strengthen and console his wife.

Bristol was henceforth a place of mournful memories. "Edith," writes Southey, "will be nowhere so well as with her sister Coleridge. She has a little girl some six months old, and I shall try and graft her into the wound while it is yet fresh." Thus Greta Hall received its guests (September, 1803). At first the sight of little Sara Coleridge and her baby cooings caused shootings of pain on which Southey had not counted. Was the experiment of this removal to prove a failure? He still felt as if he were a feather driven by the wind. "I have no symptoms of root-striking here," he said. But he spoke, not knowing what was before him; the years of wandering were indeed over; here he had found his home.

CHAPTER IV.

WAYS OF LIFE AT KESWICK, 1803—1839.

THE best of life with Southey was yet to come; but in what remains there are few outstanding events to chronicle; there is nowhere any splendour of circumstance. Of some lives the virtue is distilled, as it were, into a few exquisite moments—moments of rapture, of vision, of sudden and shining achievement; all the days and years seem to exist only for the sake of such faultless moments, and it matters little whether such a life, of whose very essence it is to break the bounds of time and space, be long or short as measured by the falling of sandgrains or the creeping of a shadow. Southey's life was not one of these; its excellence was constant, uniform, perhaps somewhat too evenly distributed. He wrought in his place day after day, season after season. He submitted to the good laws of use and wont. He grew stronger, calmer, more full-fraught with stores of knowledge, richer in treasure of the heart. Time laid its hand upon him gently and unfalteringly; the bounding step became less light and swift; the ringing voice lapsed into sadder fits of silence; the raven hair changed to a snowy white; only still the indefatigable eye ran down the long folio columns, and the indefatigable hand still held the pen,—until all true life had ceased. When it has been said that Southey was appointed

Pye's successor in the laureateship, that he received an honorary degree from his university, that now and again he visited the Continent, that children were born to him from among whom death made choice of the dearest, and when we add that he wrote and published books, the leading facts of Southey's life have been told. Had he been a worse or a weaker man, we might look to find mysteries, picturesque vices, or engaging follies; as it is, everything is plain, straightforward, substantial. What makes the life of Southey eminent and singular is its unity of purpose, its persistent devotion to a chosen object, its simplicity, purity, loyalty, fortitude, kindliness, truth.

The river Greta, before passing under the bridge at the end of Main Street, Keswick, winds about the little hill on which stands Greta Hall; its murmur may be heard when all is still beyond the garden and orchard; to the west it catches the evening light. "In front," Coleridge wrote when first inviting his friend to settle with him, "we have a giants' camp—an encamped army of tent-like mountains, which by an inverted arch gives a view of another vale. On our right the lovely vale and the wedge-shaped lake of Bassenthwaite; and on our left Derwentwater and Lodore full in view, and the fantastic mountains of Borrowdale. Behind us the massy Skiddaw, smooth, green, high, with two chasms and a tent-like ridge in the larger." Southey's house belongs in a peculiar degree to his life; in it were stored the treasures upon which his intellect drew for sustenance; in it his affections found their earthly abiding-place; all the most mirthful, all the most mournful recollections of Southey hang about it; to it in every little wandering his heart reverted like an exile's; it was at once his workshop and his play-ground; and for a time,

while he endured a living death, it became his antechamber to the tomb. The rambling tenement consisted of two houses under one roof, the larger part being occupied by the Coleridges and Southeys, the smaller for a time by Mr. Jackson, their landlord. On the ground-floor was the parlour which served as dining-room and general sitting-room, a pleasant chamber looking upon the green in front; here also were Aunt Lovell's sitting-room, and the mangling-room, in which stood ranged in a row the long array of clogs from the greatest even unto the least, figuring in a symbol the various stages of human life. The stairs to the right of the kitchen led to a landing-place filled with bookcases; a few steps more led to the little bedroom occupied by Mrs. Coleridge and her daughter. "A few steps farther," writes Sara Coleridge, whose description is here given in abridgment, "was a little wing bedroom,—then the study, where my uncle sat all day occupied with literary labours and researches, but which was used as a drawing-room for company. Here all the tea-visiting guests were received. The room had three windows, a large one looking down upon the green with the wide flower-border, and over to Keswick Lake and mountains beyond. There were two smaller windows looking towards the lower part of the town seen beyond the nursery-garden. The room was lined with books in fine bindings; there were books also in brackets, elegantly lettered vellum-covered volumes lying on their sides in a heap. The walls were hung with pictures mostly portraits. . . . At the back of the room was a comfortable sofa, and there were sundry tables, beside my uncle's library table, his screen, desk, &c. Altogether, with its internal fittings up, its noble outlook, and something pleasing in its proportions, this was a

charming room." Hard by the study was Southey's bedroom. We need not ramble farther through passages lined with books, and up and down flights of stairs to Mr. Jackson's organ-room, and Mrs. Lovell's room, and Hartley's parlour and the nurseries and the dark apple-room supposed to be the abode of a bogle. Without, green-sward, flowers, shrubs, strawberry-beds, fruit-trees encircled the house; to the back, beyond the orchard a little wood stretched down to the river side. A rough path ran along the bottom of the wood; here on a covered seat Southey often read or planned future work, and here his little niece loved to play in sight of the dimpling water. "Dear Greta Hall!" she exclaims, "and oh, that rough path beside the Greta! How much of my childhood, of my girlhood, of my youth were spent there!"

Southey's attachment to his mountain town and its lakes was of no sudden growth. He came to them as one not born under their influence; that power of hills, to which Wordsworth owed fealty, had not brooded upon Southey during boyhood; the rich southern meadows, the wooded cliffs of Avon, the breezy downs had nurtured his imagination, and to these he was still bound by pieties of the heart. In the churchyard at Ashton, where lay his father and his kinsfolk the beneficent cloud of mingled love and sorrow most overshadowed his spirit. His imagination did not soar, as did Wordsworth's, in naked solitudes; he did not commune with a Presence immanent in external nature; the world, as he viewed it, was an admirable habitation for mankind—a habitation with a history. Even after he had grown a mountaineer he loved a humanized landscape, one in which the gains of man's courage, toil, and endurance are apparent. Flanders, where the spade has wrought its miracles

of diligence, where the slow canal-boat glides, where the *carillons* ripple from old spires, where sturdy burghers fought for freedom, and where vellum-bound quartos might be sought and found, Flanders on the whole gave Southey deeper and stronger feelings than did Switzerland. The ideal land of his dreams was always Portugal; the earthly paradise for him was Cintra with its glory of sun, and a glow even in its depths of shadow. But as the years went by, Portugal became more and more a memory, less and less a hope; and the realities of life in his home were of more worth every day. When, in 1807, it grew clear that Greta Hall was to be his life-long place of abode, Southey's heart closed upon it with a tenacious grasp. He set the plasterer and carpenter to work, he planted shrubs, he enclosed the garden, he gathered his books about him, and thought that here were materials for the industry of many years; he held in his arms children who were born in this new home; and he looked to Crosthwaite Churchyard, expecting, with quiet satisfaction, that when toil was ended he should there take his rest.

"I don't talk much about these things," Southey writes, "but these lakes and mountains give me a deep joy for which I suspect nothing elsewhere can compensate, and this is a feeling which time strengthens instead of weakening." Some of the delights of southern counties he missed; his earliest and deepest recollections were connected with flowers; both flowers and fruits were now too few; there was not a cowslip to be found near Keswick. "Here in Cumberland I miss the nightingale and the violet—the most delightful bird and the sweetest flower." But for such losses there were compensations. A pastoral land will give amiable pledges for the seasons and the

months, and will perform its engagements with a punctual observance; to this the mountains hardly condescend, but they shower at their will a sudden largess of unimagined beauty. Southey would sally out for a constitutional at his three-mile pace, the peaked cap slightly shadowing his eyes which were coursing over the pages of a book held open as he walked; he had left his study to obtain exercise, and so to preserve health; he was not a laker engaged in view-hunting; he did not affect the contemplative mood which at the time was not and could not be his. But when he raised his eyes, or when quickening his three-mile to a four-mile pace he closed the book, the beauty which lay around him liberated and soothed his spirit. This it did unfailingly; and it might do more, for incalculable splendours, visionary glories, exaltations, terrors are momentarily possible where mountain and cloud and wind and sunshine meet. Southey, as he says, did not talk much of these things, but they made life for him immeasurably better than it would have been in city confinement; there were spaces, vistas, an atmosphere around his sphere of work, which lightened and relieved it. The engagements in his study were always so numerous and so full of interest that it needed an effort to leave the table piled with books and papers. But a May morning would draw him forth into the sun in spite of himself. Once abroad, Southey had a vigorous joy in the quickened blood, and the muscles impatient with energy long pent up. The streams were his especial delight; he never tired of their deep retirement, their shy loveliness and their melody; they could often beguile him into an hour of idle meditation; their beauty has in an especial degree passed into his verse. When his sailor brother Thomas came and settled in the Vale of New-

lands, Southey would quickly cover the ground from Keswick at his four-mile pace, and in the beck at the bottom of Tom's fields on summer days, he would plunge and re-plunge and act the river-god in the natural seats of mossy stone. Or he would be overpowered some autumn morning by the clamour of childish voices voting a holiday by acclamation. Their father must accompany them; it would do him good, they knew it would; they knew he did not take sufficient exercise, for they had heard him say so. Where should the scramble be? To Skiddaw Dod, or Causey Pike, or Watenlath, or as a compromise between their exuberant activity and his inclination for the chair and the fireside, to Walla Crag? And there, while his young companions opened their baskets and took their noonday meal, Southey would seat himself—as Westall has drawn him—upon the bough of an ash-tree, the water flowing smooth and green at his feet, but a little higher up broken, flashing, and whitening in its fall; and there in the still autumn noon he would muse happily, placidly, not now remembering with over-keen desire the gurgling tanks and fountains of Cintra, his Paradise of early manhood.[1]

On summer days, when the visits of friends, or strangers bearing letters of introduction, compelled him to idleness, Southey's more ambitious excursions were taken. But he was well aware that those who form acquaintance with a mountain region during a summer all blue and gold, know little of its finer power. It is October that brings most often those days faultless, pearl-pure, of affecting influence,

> In the long year set
> Like captain jewels in the carcanet.

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[1] For Westall's drawing, and the description of Walla Crag, see "Sir Thomas More:" Colloquy VI.

Then, as Wordsworth has said, the atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely harmonized; and, in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments. Even December is a better month than July for perceiving the special greatness of a mountainous country. When the snow lies on the fells soft and smooth, Grisedale Pike and Skiddaw drink in tints at morning and evening marvellous as those seen upon Mont Blanc or the Jungfrau for purity and richness.

"Summer," writes Southey, "is not the season for this country. Coleridge says, and says well, that then it is like a theatre at noon. There are no *goings on* under a clear sky; but at other seasons there is such shifting of shades, such islands of light, such columns and buttresses of sunshine, as might almost make a painter burn his brushes, as the sorcerers did their books of magic when they saw the divinity which rested upon the apostles. The very snow, which you would perhaps think must monotonize the mountains, gives new varieties; it brings out their recesses and designates all their inequalities, it impresses a better feeling of their height, and it reflects such tints of saffron, or fawn, or rose-colour to the evening sun. *O Maria Santissima!* Mount Horeb with the glory upon its summit might have been more glorious, but not more beautiful than old Skiddaw in his winter pelisse. I will not quarrel with frost, though the fellow has the impudence to take me by the nose. The lake-side has such ten thousand charms: a fleece of snow or of the hoar frost lies on the fallen trees or large stones; the grass-

points, that just peer above the water, are powdered with diamonds; the ice on the margin with chains of crystal, and such veins and wavy lines of beauty as mock all art; and, to crown all, Coleridge and I have found out that stones thrown upon the lake when frozen make a noise like singing birds, and when you whirl on it a large flake of ice, away the shivers slide chirping and warbling like a flight of finches." This tells of a February at Keswick; the following describes the *goings on* under an autumn sky:—"The mountains on Thursday evening, before the sun was quite down, or the moon bright, were all of one dead-blue colour; their rifts and rocks and swells and scars had all disappeared—the surface was perfectly uniform, nothing but the outline distinct; and this even surface of dead blue, from its unnatural uniformity, made them, though not transparent, appear transvious—as though they were of some soft or cloudy texture through which you could have passed. I never saw any appearance so perfectly unreal. Sometimes a blazing sunset seems to steep them through and through with red light; or it is a cloudy morning, and the sunshine slants down through a rift in the clouds, and the pillar of light makes the spot whereon it falls so emerald green, that it looks like a little field of Paradise. At night you lose the mountains, and the wind so stirs up the lake that it looks like the sea by moonlight."

If Southey had not a companion by his side, the solitude of his ramble was unbroken; he never had the knack of forgathering with chance acquaintance. With intellectual and moral boldness, and with high spirits, he united a constitutional bashfulness and reserve. His retired life, his habits of constant study, and in later years his shortness of sight fell in with this infirmity. He would not

patronize his humbler neighbours; he had a kind of imaginative jealousy on behalf of their rights as independent persons; and he could not be sure of straightway discovering, by any genius or instinct of good-fellowship, that common ground whereon strangers are at home with one another. Hence,—and Southey himself wished that it had been otherwise,—long as he resided at Keswick there were perhaps not twenty persons of the lower ranks whom he knew by sight. "After slightly returning the salutation of some passer-by," says his son, "he would again mechanically lift his cap as he heard some well-known name in reply to his inquiries, and look back with regret that the greeting had not been more cordial."

If the ice were fairly broken, he found it natural to be easy and familiar, and by those whom he employed he was regarded with affectionate reverence. Mrs. Wilson, kind and generous creature, remained in Greta Hall tending the children as they grew up until she died, grieved for by the whole household. Joseph Glover who created the scarecrow "Statues" for the garden—male and female created he them, as the reader may see them figured toward the close of *The Doctor*,—Glover the artist who set up Edith's fantastic chimney-piece ("Well, Miss Southey," cried honest Joseph, "I've done my Devils"), was employed by Southey during five-and-twenty years, ever since he was a 'prentice boy. If any warm-hearted neighbour, known or unknown to him, came forward with a demand on Southey's sympathies, he was sure to meet a neighbourly response. When the miller, who had never spoken to him before, invited the laureate to rejoice with him over the pig he had killed—the finest ever fattened—and when Southey was led to the place

where that which had ceased to be pig and was not yet bacon, was hung up by the hind feet, he filled up the measure of the good man's joy by hearty appreciation of a porker's points. But Cumberland enthusiasm seldom flames abroad with so prodigal a blaze as that of the worthy miller's heart.

Within the charmed circle of home, Southey's temper and manners were full of a strong and sweet hilarity; and the home circle was in itself a considerable group of persons. The Pantisocratic scheme of a community was after all near finding a fulfilment, only that the Greta ran by in place of the Susquehanna, and that Southey took upon his own shoulders the work of the dead Lovell, and of Coleridge, who lay in weakness and dejection, whelmed under the tide of dreams. For some little time Coleridge continued to reside at Keswick an admirable companion in almost all moods of mind, for all kinds of wisdom, and all kinds of nonsense. When he was driven abroad in search of health, it seemed as if a brightness were gone out of the air, and the horizon of life had grown definite and contracted. "It is now almost ten years," Southey writes, "since he and I first met in my rooms at Oxford, which meeting decided the destiny of both. . . . I am perpetually pained at thinking what he ought to be, . . but the tidings of his death would come upon me more like a stroke of lightning than any evil I have ever yet endured."

Mrs. Coleridge with her children remained at Greta Hall. That quaint little metaphysician, Hartley, now answering to the name of Moses, now to that of Job, the oddest of all God's creatures, was an unceasing wonder and delight to his uncle—"a strange,

strange boy, 'exquisitely wild,' an utter visionary, like the moon among thin clouds he moves in a circle of his own making. He alone is a light of his own. Of all human beings I never saw one so utterly naked of self." When his father expressed surprise that Hartley should take his pleasure of wheel-barrow-riding so sadly, "The pity is"—explained little Job—"the pity is *I'se* always thinking of my thoughts." "'I'm a boy of a very religious turn,' he says; for he always talks of himself and examines his own character, just as if he were speaking of another person, and as impartially. Every night he makes an extempore prayer aloud; but it is always in bed, and not till he is comfortable there and got into the mood. When he is ready, he touches Mrs. Wilson, who sleeps with him, and says, 'Now listen!' and off he sets like a preacher." Younger than Hartley was Derwent Coleridge, a fair broad-chested boy, with merry eye and roguish lips, now grown out of that yellow frock in which he had earned his name of Stumpy Canary. Sara Coleridge, when her uncle came to Keswick after the death of his own Margery, was a little grand-lama at that worshipful age of seven months. A fall into the Greta a year and a half later, helped to change her to the delicate creature, whose large blue eyes would look up timidly from under her lace border and mufflings of muslin. No feeling towards their father save a reverent loyalty did the Coleridge children ever learn under Southey's roof. But when the pale-faced wanderer returned from Italy, he surprised and froze his daughter by a sudden revelation of that jealousy which is the fond injustice of an unsatisfied heart, and which a child who has freely given and taken love finds it hard to comprehend. "I think my dear father," writes Sara Coleridge,

"was anxious that I should learn to love him and the Wordsworths and their children, and not cling so exclusively to my mother and all around me at home." Love him and revere his memory she did; to Wordsworth she was conscious of owing more than to any other teacher or inspirer in matters of the intellect and imagination. But in matters of the heart and conscience the daily life of Southey was the book in which she read; he was, she would emphatically declare, "upon the whole the best man she had ever known."

But the nepotism of the most "nepotious" uncle is not a perfect substitute for fatherhood with its hopes and fears. May-morning of the year 1804, saw "an Edithling very, very ugly, with no more beauty than a young dodo," nestling by Edith Southey's side. A trembling thankfulness possessed the little one's father; but when the Arctic weather changed suddenly to days of genial sunshine, and groves and gardens burst into living greenery, and rang with song, his heart was caught into the general joy. Southey was not without a presentiment that his young dodo would improve. Soon her premature activity of eye and spirits troubled him, and he tried while cherishing her to put a guard upon his heart. "I did not mean to trust my affections again on so frail a foundation,—and yet the young one takes me from my desk and makes me talk nonsense as fluently as you perhaps can imagine." When Sara Coleridge,—not yet five years old, but already, as she half believed, promised in marriage to Mr. De Quincey,—returned after a short absence to Greta Hall, she saw her baby cousin, sixteen months younger, and therefore not yet marriageable, grown into a little girl very fair, with thick golden hair, and round rosy cheeks. Edith Southey inherited something of her father's looks,

and of his swift intelligence; with her growing beauty of face and limbs a growing excellence of inward nature kept pace. At twenty she was the "elegant cygnet" of Amelia Opie's album verses,

> 'Twas pleasant to meet
> And see thee famed Swan of the Derwent's fair tide
> With that elegant cygnet that floats by thy side,

a compliment her father mischievously would not let her Elegancy forget. Those who would know her in the loveliness of youthful womanhood may turn to Wordsworth's poem *The Triad*, where she appears first of the three "sister nymphs" of Keswick and Rydal; or, Hartley Coleridge's exquisite sonnet, *To a lofty beauty from her poor kinsman*:—

> Methinks thy scornful mood,
> And bearing high of stately womanhood,—
> Thy brow where Beauty sits to tyrannize
> O'er humble love, had made me sadly fear thee:
> For never sure was seen a royal bride,
> Whose gentleness gave grace to so much pride—
> My very thoughts would tremble to be near thee,
> But when I see thee by thy father's side
> Old times unqueen thee, and old loves endear thee.

But it is best of all to remember Southey's daughter in connexion with one letter of her father's. In 1805 he visited Scotland alone; he had looked forward to carrying on the most cherished purpose of his life—the History of Portugal—among the libraries of Lisbon. But it would be difficult to induce Mrs. Southey to travel with the Edithling. Could he go alone? The short absence in Scotland served to test his heart, and so to make his future clear:—

"I need not tell you, my own dear Edith, not to read my letters aloud till you have first of all seen what is written only

for yourself. What I have now to say to you is, that having been eight days from home, with as little discomfort, and as little reason for discomfort, as a man can reasonably expect, I have yet felt so little comfortable, so great sense of solitariness and so many homeward yearnings, that certainly I will not go to Lisbon without you; a resolution which, if your feelings be at all like mine, will not displease you. If, on mature consideration, you think the inconvenience of a voyage more than you ought to submit to, I must be content to stay in England, as on my part it certainly is not worth while to sacrifice a year's happiness; for though not unhappy (my mind is too active and too well disciplined to yield to any such criminal weakness), still without you I am not happy. But for your sake as well as my own, and for little Edith's sake I will not consent to any separation; the growth of a year's love between her and me, if it please God that she should live, is a thing too delightful in itself, and too valuable in its consequences, both to her and me, to be given up for any light inconvenience either on your part or mine. An absence of a year would make her effectually forget me. . . . . But of these things we will talk at leisure; only dear, dear Edith, we must not part."

Such wisdom of the heart was justified; the year of growing love bore precious fruit. When Edith May was ten years old her father dedicated to her, in verses laden with a father's tenderest thoughts and feelings, his *Tale of Paraguay*. He recalls the day of her birth, the preceding sorrow for his first child whose infant features have faded from him like a passing cloud; the gladness of that singing month of May; the seasons that followed during which he observed the dawning of the divine light in her eyes; the playful guiles by which he won from her repeated kisses; to him these ten years seem like yesterday; but to her they have brought discourse of reason, with the sense of time and change:—

> And I have seen thine eyes suffused in grief
> When I have said that with autumnal grey

> The touch of eld hath mark'd thy father's head;
> That even the longest day of life is brief,
> And mine is falling fast into the yellow leaf.

Other children followed, until a happy stir of life filled the house. Emma, the quietest of infants, whose voice was seldom heard, and whose dark-grey eyes too seldom shone in her father's study, slipped quietly out of the world after a hand's-breadth of existence; but to Southey she was no more really lost than the buried brother and sister were to the cottage girl of Wordsworth's *We are seven.* "I have five children," he says in 1809; "three of them at home, and two under my mother's care in heaven." Of all the most radiantly beautiful was Isabel; the most passionately loved was Herbert. "My other two are the most perfect contrast you ever saw. Bertha, whom I call Queen Henry the Eighth, from her likeness to King Bluebeard, grows like Jonah's gourd, and is the very picture of robust health; and little Kate hardly seems to grow at all, though perfectly well,—she is round as a mushroom-button. Bertha, the bluff queen, is just as grave as Kate is garrulous; they are inseparable play-fellows, and go about the house hand in hand."

Among the inmates of Greta Hall, to overlook Lord Nelson and Bona Marietta, with their numerous successors, would be a grave delinquency. To be a cat was to be a privileged member of the little republic to which Southey gave laws. Among the fragments at the end of *The Doctor* will be found a Chronicle History of the Cattery of Cat's Eden, and some of Southey's frolic letters are written as if his whole business in life were that of secretary for feline affairs in Greta Hall. A house, he declared, is never perfectly furnished for enjoyment unless

there is in it a child rising three years old and a kitten rising six weeks; "kitten is in the animal world what the rosebud is in the garden." Lord Nelson, an ugly specimen of the streaked-carroty or Judas-coloured kind, yet withal a good cat, affectionate, vigilant, and brave, was succeeded by Madame Bianchi, a beautiful and singular creature, white with a fine tabby tail; "her wild eyes were bright and green as the Duchess de Cadaval's emerald necklace." She fled away with her niece Pulcheria on the day when good old Mrs. Wilson died; nor could any allurements induce the pair to domesticate themselves again. For some time a cloud of doom seemed to hang over Cat's Eden. Ovid and Virgil, Othello the Moor, and Pope Joan perished miserably. At last Fortune, as if to make amends for her unkindness, sent to Greta Hall almost together the never-to-be-enough-praised Rumpelstilzchen (afterwards raised for services against rats to be His Serene Highness the Archduke Rumpelstilzchen), and the equally-to-be-praised Hurly-burly buss. With whom too soon we must close the catalogue.

The revenue to maintain this household was in the main won by Southey's pen. "It is a difficult as well as a delicate task," he wrote in the *Quarterly Review*, "to advise a youth of ardent mind and aspiring thoughts in the choice of a profession; but a wise man will have no hesitation in exhorting him to choose anything rather than literature. Better that he should seek his fortune before the mast, or with a musket on his shoulder and a knapsack on his back, better that he should follow the plough, or work at the loom or the lathe, or sweat over the anvil, than trust to literature as the only means of his support." Southey's own bent towards literature was too strong to be altered. But, while he accepted loyally the burdens

of his profession as a man of letters, he knew how stout a back is needed to bear them month after month and year after year. Absolutely dependent on his pen he was at no time. His generous friend Wynn, upon coming of age, allowed him annually 160*l.*, until in 1807 he was able to procure for Southey a Government pension for literary services amounting, clear of taxes, to nearly the same sum. Southey had as truly as any man the pride of independence, but he had none of its vanity; there was no humiliation in accepting a service from one whom friendship had made as close as a brother; men, he says, are as much better for the good offices which they receive as for those they bestow; and his own was no niggard hand. Knowing both to give and to take, with him the remembrance that he owed much to others was among the precious possessions of life which bind us to our kind with bonds of sonship not of slavery. Of the many kindnesses which he received he never forgot one. "Had it not been for your aid," he writes to Wynn, forty years after their first meeting in Dean's Yard, "I should have been irretrievably wrecked when I ran upon the shoals, with all sail set, in the very outset of my voyage." And to another good old friend who from his own modest station applauded while Southey ran forward in the race: "Do you suppose, Cottle, that I have forgotten those true and most essential acts of friendship which you showed me when I stood most in need of them? Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding-ring and paid my marriage-fees, was supplied by you. It was with your sisters I left Edith during my six months' absence, and for the six months after my return it was from you that I received, week by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to

live by other means. It is not the settling of a cash account that can cancel obligations like these. You are in the habit of preserving your letters, and if you were not, I would entreat you to preserve *this* that it might be seen hereafter. . . . . My head throbs and my eyes burn with these recollections. Good night! my dear old friend and benefactor."

Anxiety about his worldly fortunes never cost Southey a sleepless night. His disposition was always hopeful; relying on Providence, he says, I could rely upon myself. When he had little, he lived upon little, never spending when it was necessary to spare, and his means grew with his expenses. Business habits he had none; never in his life did he cast up an account; but in a general way he knew that money comes by honest toil and grows by diligent husbandry. Upon Mrs. Southey, who had an eye to all the household outgoings, the cares of this life fell more heavily. Sara Coleridge calls to mind her aunt as she moved about Greta Hall intent on house affairs, "with her fine figure and quietly commanding air." Alas! under this gracious dignity of manner the wear and tear of life were doing their work surely. Still, it was honest wear and tear. "I never knew her to do an unkind act," says Southey, "nor say an unkind word;" but when stroke followed upon stroke of sorrow, they found her without that elastic temper which rises and recovers itself. Until the saddest of afflictions made her helpless, everything was left to her management and was managed so quietly and well, that except in times of sickness and bereavement, "I had," writes her husband, "literally no cares." Thus free from harass Southey toiled in his library; he toiled not for bread alone, but also for freedom. There were great designs

before him which, he was well aware, if ever realized would make but a poor return to the household coffer. To gain time and a vantage-ground for these he was content to yield much of his strength to work of temporary value, always contriving however to strike a mean in this journeyman service between what was most and least akin to his proper pursuits. When a parcel of books arrived from the Annual Review, he groaned in spirit over the sacrifice of time; but patience! it is after all better, he would reflect, than pleading in a court of law; better than being called up at midnight to a patient; better than calculating profit and loss at a counter; better in short than anything but independence. "I am a quiet, patient, easy-going hack of the mule breed," —he writes to Grosvenor Bedford,—"regular as clock-work in my pace, sure-footed, bearing the burden which is laid on me, and only obstinate in choosing my own path. If Gifford could see me by this fireside where, like Nicodemus, one candle suffices me in a large room, he would see a man in a coat 'still more threadbare than his own,' when he wrote his 'Imitation,' working hard and getting little—a bare maintenance, and hardly that; writing poems and history for posterity with his whole heart and soul; one daily progressive in learning, not so learned as he is poor, not so poor as proud; not so proud as happy. Grosvenor, there is not a lighter-hearted nor a happier man upon the face of this wide world." When these words were written, Herbert stood by his father's side; it was sweet to work that his boy might have his play-time glad and free.

The public estimate of Southey's works as expressed in pounds, shillings, and pence was lowest where he held that it ought to have been highest. For the *History of*

Brazil, a work of stupendous toil, which no one in England could have produced save Southey himself, he had not received after eight years, as much as for a single article in the Quarterly Review. *Madoc*, the pillar, as he supposed, on which his poetical fame was to rest, *Madòc*, which he dismissed with an awed feeling as if in it he were parting with a great fragment of his life, brought its author after twelve months' sales the sum of three pounds, seventeen shillings and one penny. On the other hand, for his *Naval Biography*, which interested him less than most of his works, and which was undertaken after hesitation, he was promised five hundred guineas a volume. Notwithstanding his unwearied exertions, his modest scale of expenditure, and his profitable connexion with the *Quarterly Review*—for an important article he would receive one hundred pounds—he never had a year's income in advance until that year late in his life in which Sir Robert Peel offered him a baronetcy. In 1818, the lucky payment of a bad debt enabled him to buy three hundred pounds in the Three-per-cents. "I have 100*l.* already there," he writes "and shall then be worth 12*l.* per annum." By 1821 this sum had grown to 625*l.*, the gatherings of half a life-time. In that year his friend John May, whose acquaintance he had made in Portugal, and to whose kindness he was a debtor, suffered the loss of his fortune. As soon as Southey had heard the state of affairs, his decision was formed. "By this post," he tells his friend, "I write to Bedford, desiring that he will transfer to you 625*l.* in the Three-per-cents. I wish it was more and that I had more at my command in any way. I shall in the spring, if I am paid for the first volume of my History as soon as it is finished. One hundred I should, at all events, have sent you then. It

shall be as much more as I receive." And he goes on in cheery words to invite John May to break away from business and come to Keswick, there to lay in "a pleasant store of recollections which in all moods of mind are wholesome." One rejoices that Southey, poor of worldly goods, knew the happiness of being so simply and nobly generous.

Blue and white china, mediæval ivories, engravings by the Little Masters, Chippendale cabinets, did not excite pining desire in Southey's breast; yet in one direction he indulged the passion of a collector. If with respect to any of "the things independent of the will," he showed a want of moderation unworthy of his discipleship to Epictetus, it was assuredly with respect to books. Before he possessed a fixed home he was already moored to his folios; and when once he was fairly settled at Keswick, many a time the carriers on the London road found their lading the larger by a weighty packet on its way to Greta Hall. Never did he run north or south for a holiday, but the inevitable parcel preceded or followed his return. Never did he cross to the Continent but a bulkier bale arrived in its own good time enclosing precious things. His morality, in all else void of offence, here yielded to the seducer. It is thought that Southey was in the main honest; but if Dirk Hatteraick had run ashore a hundredweight of the Acta Sanctorum duty-free, the king's laureate was not the man to set the sharks upon him, and it is to be feared that the pattern of probity, the virtuous Southey himself, might in such circumstances be found, under cover of night, lugging his prize landwards from its retreat beneath the rocks. Unquestionably at one time certain parcels from Portugal—only of such a size as could be carried under the

arm—were silently brought ashore to the defrauding of the revenue, and somehow found their way by-and-by to Greta Hall. "We maintain a trade," says the Governor of the Strangers' House in Bacon's philosophical romance, "not for gold, silver or jewels, nor for silks, nor for spices, nor any other commodity of matter, but only for God's first creature, which was *light*." Such too was Southey's trade, and he held that God's first creature is free to travel unchallenged by revenue-cutter.

"Why, Montesinos," asks the ghostly Sir Thomas More in one of Southey's *Colloquies*, "with these books and the delight you take in their constant society, what have you to covet or desire?" "Nothing," is the answer, ". . . . except more books." When Southey, in 1805, went to see Walter Scott, it occurred to him in Edinburgh that having had neither new coat nor hat since little Edith was born he must surely be in want of both, and here, in the metropolis of the North, was an opportunity of arraying himself to his desire. "Howbeit," he says, "on considering the really respectable appearance which my old ones made for a traveller,—and considering, moreover, that as learning was better than house or land, it certainly must be much better than fine clothes—I laid out all my money in books, and came home to wear out my old wardrobe in the winter." De Quincey called Southey's library his wife, and in a certain sense it was wife and mistress and mother to him. The presence and enjoying of his books was not the sole delight they afforded; there was also the pursuit, the surprisal, the love-making or wooing. And at last in his hours of weakness, once more a little child, he would walk slowly round his library, looking at his cherished volumes, taking them down mechanically, and when he could no longer

read, pressing them to his lips. In happier days the bookstalls of London knew the tall figure, the rapid stride, the quick-seeking eye, the eager fingers. Lisbon, Paris, Milan, Amsterdam contributed to the rich confusion that, from time to time, burdened the floors of library and bedrooms and passages in Greta Hall. Above all he was remembered at Brussels by that best of bookmen, Verbeyst. What mattered it that Verbeyst was a sloven, now receiving his clients with gaping shirt and now with stockingless feet; did he not duly honour letters, and had he not 300,000 volumes from which to choose? If in a moment of prudential weakness one failed to carry off such a treasure as the Monumenta Boica, or Colgar's Irish Saints, there was a chance that in Verbeyst's vast storehouse the volume might lurk for a year or two. And Verbeyst loved his books; only less than he loved his handsome good-natured wife, who for a liberal customer would fetch the bread and burgundy. Henry Taylor dwelt in Robert Southey's heart of hearts; but let not Henry Taylor treasonably hint that Verbeyst, the prince of booksellers, had not a prince's politeness of punctuality. If sundry books promised had not arrived, it was because they were not easily procured; moreover, the good-natured wife had died—*bien des malheurs*, and Verbeyst's heart was fallen into a lethargy. "Think ill of our fathers which are in the Row, think ill of John Murray, think ill of Colburn, think ill of the whole race of bibliopoles, except Verbeyst, who is always to be thought of with liking and respect." And when the bill of lading, coming slow but sure, announced that saints and chroniclers and poets were on their way, "by this day month," wrote Southey, "they will probably be here; then shall I be happier than if his Majesty King George the Fourth were to give orders that

I should be clothed in purple, and sleep upon gold, and have a chain upon my neck, and sit next him because of my wisdom, and be called his cousin."

Thus the four thousand volumes, which lay piled about the library when Southey first gathered his possessions together, grew and grew, year after year until the grand total mounted up to eight, to ten, to fourteen thousand. Now Kirke White's brother Neville sends him a gift of Sir William Jones's works, thirteen volumes, in binding of bewildering loveliness. Now Landor ships from some Italian port a chest containing treasures of less dubious value than the Raffaelles and Leonardos with which he liberally supplied his art-loving friends. Oh, the joy of opening such a chest; of discovering the glorious folios; of glancing with the shy amorousness of first desire at title-page and colophon; of growing familiarity; of tracing out the history suggested by book-plate or autograph; of finding a lover's excuses for cropped margin, or water-stain, or worm-hole. Then the calmer happiness of arranging his favourites on new shelves; of taking them down again after supper in the season of meditation and currant-rum; and of wondering for which among his father's books Herbert will care most when all of them shall be his own. "It would please you," Southey writes to his old comrade, Bedford, "to see such a display of literary wealth, which is at once the pride of my eye, and the joy of my heart, and the food of my mind; indeed, more than metaphorically, meat, drink and clothes for me and mine. I verily believe that no one in my station was ever so rich before, and I am very sure that no one in any station had ever a more thorough enjoyment of riches of any kind or in any way."

Southey's Spanish and Portuguese collection—if Heber's great library be set aside—was probably the most remark-

able gathering of such books in the possession of any private person in this country. It included several manuscripts, some of which were displayed with due distinction upon brackets. Books in white and gold—vellum or parchment bound, with gilt lettering in the old English type which Southey loved—were arranged in effective positions pyramid-wise. Southey himself had learned the mystery of book-binding, and from him his daughters acquired that art; the ragged volumes were decently clothed in coloured cotton prints; these, presenting a strange patchwork of colours, quite filled one room which was known as the Cottonian Library. "Paul," a book-room on the ground floor, had been so called because "Peter" the organ-room was robbed to fit it with books. "Paul is a great comfort to us, and being dressed up with Peter's property, makes a most respectable appearance, and receives that attention which is generally shown to the youngest child. The study has not actually been Petered on Paul's account, but there has been an exchange negotiated which we think is for their mutual advantage. Twenty gilt volumes, from under the 'Beauties of England and Wales,' have been marched down-stairs rank and file, and their place supplied by the long set of Lope de Vega with green backs."

Southey's books, as he assures his ghostly monitor in the *Colloquies*, were not drawn up on his shelves for display, however much the pride of the eye might be gratified in beholding them; they were on actual service. Generations might pass away before some of them would again find a reader; in their mountain home they were prized and known as perhaps they never had been known before. Not a few of the volumes had been cast up from the wreck of family or convent libraries during the Revolution. "Yonder Acta

Sanctorum belonged to the Capuchines at Ghent. This book of St. Bridget's Revelations, in which not only all the initial letters are illuminated, but every capital throughout the volume was coloured, came from the Carmelite Nunnery at Bruges. . Here are books from Colbert's library; here others from the Lamoignon one. . Yonder Chronicle History of King D. Manoel, by Damiam de Goes, and yonder General History of Spain, by Esteban de Garibay, are signed by their respective authors. . . This Copy of Casaubon's Epistles was sent to me from Florence by Walter Landor. He had perused it carefully, and to that perusal we are indebted for one of the most pleasing of his Conversations. . Here is a book with which Lauderdale amused himself, when Cromwell kept him in prison in Windsor Castle. . Here I possess these gathered treasures of time, the harvest of many generations, laid up in my garners: and when I go to the window there is the lake, and the circle of the mountains, and the illimitable sky."

Not a few of his books were dead, and to live among these was like living among the tombs; "Behold, this also is vanity," Southey makes confession. But when Sir Thomas questions, "Has it proved to you 'vexation of spirit' also?" the Cumberland mountain-dweller breaks forth: "Oh no! for never can any man's life have been past more in accord with his own inclinations nor more answerably to his desires. Excepting that peace, which, through God's infinite mercy, is derived from a higher source, it is to literature, humanly speaking, that I am beholden, not only for the means of subsistence, but for every blessing which I enjoy; health of mind and activity of mind, contentment, cheerfulness, continual employment and therefore continual pleasure. *Suavissima*

vita indies sentire se fieri meliorem; and this as Bacon has said, and Clarendon repeated, is the benefit that a studious man enjoys in retirement." Such a grave gladness underlay all Southey's frolic moods, and in union with a clear-sighted acceptance of the conditions of human happiness,—its inevitable shocks, its transitory nature as far as it belongs to man's life on earth—made up part of his habitual temper.

Southey coursed from page to page with a greyhound's speed; a tiny *s* pencilled in the margin served to indicate what might be required for future use. Neatness he had learnt from Miss Tyler long ago; and by experience he acquired his method. On a slip of paper which served as marker he would note the pages to which he needed to return. In the course of a few hours he had classified and arranged everything in a book which it was likely he would ever want. A reference to the less important passages sufficed; those of special interest were transcribed by his wife, or one of his daughters, or more frequently by Southey himself; finally, these transcripts were brought together in packets under such headings as would make it easy to discover any portion of their contents.

Such was his ordinary manner of eviscerating an author, but it was otherwise with the writers of his affection. On some—such as Jackson and Jeremy Taylor—"he *fed*," as he expressed it, "slowly and carefully, dwelling on the page, and taking in its contents, deeply and deliberately, like an epicure with his wine 'searching the subtle flavour.'" Such chosen writers remained for all times and seasons faithful and cherished friends:—

> With them I take delight in weal,
> And seek relief in woe;

And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thankful gratitude.

"If I were confined to a score of English books," says Southey, "Sir Thomas Browne would, I think, be one of them; nay probably it would be one if the selection were cut down to twelve. My library, if reduced to those bounds, would consist of Shakspeare, Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton; Jackson, Jeremy Taylor, and South; Isaac Walton, Sidney's Arcadia, Fuller's Church History, and Sir Thomas Browne; and what a wealthy and well-stored mind would that man have, what an inexhaustible reservoir, what a Bank of England to draw upon for profitable thoughts and delightful associations, who should have fed upon them." It must have gone hard with Southey in making out this list, to exclude Clarendon, and doubtless if the choice were not limited to books written in English, the Utopia would have urged its claim to admission. With less difficulty he could skip the whole of the eighteenth century. From *Samson Agonistes* to *The Task* there was no English poem which held a foremost place in his esteem. Berkeley and Butler he valued highly; but Robert South seemed to him the last of the race of the giants. An ancestral connection with Locke was not a source of pride to Southey; he respected neither the philosopher's politics nor his metaphysics; still it is pleasant, he says, to hear of somebody between oneself and Adam who has left a name.

Four volumes of what are called Southey's *Commonplace Books* have been published, containing some three thousand double-column pages; and these are but a selection from the total mass of his transcripts. It is impossible

to give a notion of a miscellany drawn from so wide-ranging a survey of poetry, biography, history, travels, topography, divinity, not in English alone, but also in Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese. Yet certain main lines can be traced which give some meaning to this huge accumulation. It is easy to perceive that the collector wrought under an historical bias, and that social, literary, and ecclesiastical history were the directions in which the historical tendency found its play. Such work of transcribing, though it did not rest Southey's hand, was a relief to his mind after the excitement of composition, and some of it may pass for a kind of busy idleness; but most of his transcripts were made with a definite purpose—that of furnishing materials for work either actually accomplished, or still in prospect, when at last the brain grew dull and the fingers slack. "I am for ever making collections," he writes, "and storing up materials which may not come into use till the Greek Calends. And this I have been doing for five and twenty years! It is true that I draw daily upon my hoards, and should be poor without them; but in prudence I ought now to be working up those materials rather than adding to so much dead stock." When Ticknor visited him in 1819, Southey opened for the young American his great bundles of manuscript materials for the History of Portugal, and the History of the Portuguese East Indies. Southey had charmed him by the kindness of his reception, by the air of culture and of goodness in his home, by his talk bright and eager, "for the quickness of his mind expresses itself in the fluency of his utterance, and yet he is ready upon almost any subject that can be proposed to him from the extent of his knowledge." And now when Ticknor saw spread before him the evidence of such unexampled industry, a kind of bewilderment took

possession of him. "Southey," he writes in his diary, "is certainly an extraordinary man, one of those whose characters I find it difficult to comprehend, because I hardly know how such elements can be brought together, such rapidity of mind with such patient labour and wearisome exactness, so mild a disposition with so much nervous excitability, and a poetical talent so elevated with such an immense mass of minute dull learning."

If Ticknor had been told that this was due to Epictetus, it might have puzzled him still more; but it is certain that only through the strenuous appliance of will to the formation of character could Southey have grown to be what he was. He had early been possessed by the belief that he must not permit himself to become the slave or the victim of sensibility, but that in the little world of man there are two powers ruling by a Divine right—reason and conscience, in loyal obedience to which lies our highest freedom. Then, too, the circumstances of his life prompted him to self-mastery and self-management. That he should every day overtake a vast amount of work was not left to his choosing or declining—it was a matter of necessity; to accomplish this he must get all possible advantage out of his rapidity of intellect and his energy of feeling, and at the same time he must never put an injurious strain on these. It would not do for Southey to burn away to-day in some white flame of excitement the nerve which he needed for use to-morrow. He could not afford to pass a sleepless night. If his face glowed or his brain throbbed, it was a warning that he had gone far enough. His very susceptibility to nervous excitement rendered caution the more requisite. William Taylor had compared him to the mimosa. Hazlitt remembered him with a quivering lip, a hectic flush upon his cheek, a

roving fire in his eye, a falcon glance, a look at once aspiring and dejected. Crabb Robinson found in him a likeness to Shelley. Humphrey Davy had proved the fineness of his sensibility by that odd neurometer the nitrous oxide. "The truth is," writes Southey, "that though some persons, whose knowledge of me is scarcely skin-deep, suppose I have no nerves, because I have great self-control as far as regards the surface, if it were not for great self-management, and what may be called a strict intellectual regimen, I should very soon be in a deplorable state of what is called nervous disease, and this would have been the case any time during the last twenty years." And again: "A man had better break a bone, or even lose a limb, than shake his nervous system. I, who never talk about my nerves (and am supposed to have none by persons who see as far into me as they do into a stone wall) know this." Southey could not afford to play away his health at hazard, and then win it back in the lounge of some foreign watering-place. His plan, on the contrary, was to keep it and to think about it as little as possible. A single prescription sufficed for a life-time—*In labore quies.* "I think I may lay claim," he says, "to the praise of self-management both in body and mind without paying too much attention to either—exercising a diseased watchfulness or playing any tricks with either." It would not have been difficult for Southey, with such a temperament as his, to have wrecked himself at the outset of his career. With beautiful foiled lives of young men Southey had a peculiar sympathy. But the gods sometimes give white hairs as an aureole to their favoured ones. Perhaps on the whole for him it was not only more prudent but also more chivalrous to study to be quiet; to create a home for those who looked to him for security;

to guard the happiness of tender women; to make smooth ways for the feet of little children; to hold hands in old age with the friends of his youth; to store his mind with treasures of knowledge; to strengthen and chasten his own heart; to grow yearly in love for his country and her venerable heritage of manners, virtue, laws; to add to her literature the outcome of an adult intellect and character; and having fought a strenuous and skilful fight, to fall as one whose sword an untimely stroke has shattered in his hand.

CHAPTER V.

WAYS OF LIFE AT KESWICK, 1803—1839 (*continued*).

THE texture of Southey's life was so uniform, the round from morning till night repeated itself with so much regularity, that one day may stand as representative of a thousand. We possess his record of how the waking hours went by when he was about thirty years old, and a similar record written when he was twice that age. His surroundings had changed in the meantime, and he himself had changed; the great bare room which he used from the first as a study, fresh-plastered in 1804, with the trowel lines on the ceiling pierced by the flaws of winter, containing two chairs and a little table,—"God help me," he exclaims, "I look in it like a cock-robin in a church" —this room had received long before 1834, its lining of comely books, its white and gold pyramids, its brackets, its cherished portraits. The occupant of the study had the same spare frame, the same aspect of lightness and of strength, the same full eyebrows shadowing the dark brown eyes, the same variously expressive muscular mouth; the youthful wildness in his countenance had given place to a thoughtful expression, and the abundant hair still clustering over his great brow was snowy white. Whatever had changed, his habits—though never his tyrants—remained, with some variations in detail, the

same. "My actions," he writes to a friend not very long after his arrival in Keswick, "are as regular as those of St. Dunstan's quarter-boys. Three pages of history after breakfast (equivalent to five in small quarto printing); then to transcribe and copy for the press, or to make my selections and biographies, or what else suits my humour till dinner-time; from dinner to tea I read, write letters, see the newspaper, and very often indulge in a siesta—for sleep agrees with me. . . . After tea I go to poetry and correct and re-write and copy till I am tired, and then turn to anything else till supper; and this is my life,—which if it be not a very merry one, is yet as happy as heart could wish." "See how the day is disposed of!" begins the later record, "I get out of bed as the clock strikes six, and shut the house-door after me as it strikes seven.[1] After two hours with Davies, home to breakfast, after which Cuthbert engages me till about half-past ten, and when the post brings no letters that either interest or trouble me (for of the latter I have many), by eleven I have done with the newspaper, and can then set about what is properly the business of the day. But letters are often to be written, and I am liable to frequent interruptions; so that there are not many mornings in which I can command from two to three unbroken hours at the desk. At two I take my daily walk, be the weather what it may, and when the weather permits, with a book in my hand; dinner at four, read about half an hour; then take to the sofa with a different book, and after a few pages get my soundest sleep, till summoned to tea at six. My best time during the winter is by candle-light; twilight inter-

[1] I.e. to go to Davies' lodgings; Davies, Dr. Bell's Secretary, was engaged in arranging a vast accumulation of papers with a view to forwarding Southey in his *Life of Bell*.

feres with it a little; and in the season of company I can never count upon an evening's work. Supper at half-past nine, after which I read an hour, and then to bed. The greatest part of my miscellaneous work is done in the odds and ends of time."

It was part of Southey's regimen to carry on several works at once; this he found to be economy of time, and he believed it necessary for the preservation of his health. Whenever one object entirely occupied his attention, it haunted him, oppressed him, troubled his dreams. The remedy was simple—to do one thing in the morning, another in the evening. To lay down poetry and presently to attack history seems feasible and no ill policy for one who is forced to take all he can out of himself; but Southey would turn from one poetical theme to another, and could day by day advance with a pair of epics. This was a source of unfailing wonder to Landor. "When I write a poem," he says, "my heart and all my feelings are upon it. . . . High poems will not admit flirtation." Little by little was Southey's way, and so he got on with many things. "Last night," he writes to Bedford, "I began the Preface [to "Specimens of English Poets"]—huzza! And now, Grosvenor, let me tell you what I have to do. I am writing—1. The History of Portugal; 2. The Chronicle of the Cid; 3. The Curse of Kehama; 4. Espriella's Letters. Look you, all these *I am* writing. . . . . By way of interlude comes in this preface. Don't swear, and bid me do one thing at a time. I tell you I can't afford to do one thing at a time—no, nor two neither; and it is only by doing many things that I contrive to do so much: for I cannot work long together at anything without hurting myself, and so I do everything by heats; then,

by the time I am tired of one, my inclination for another is come round." A strong deliberate energy accordingly is at the back of all Southey's work; but not that blind creative rapture which will have its own way, and leaves its subject weak but appeased. "In the daytime I laboured," says Landor, "and at night unburdened my soul, shedding many tears. My *Tiberius* has so shaken me at last that the least thing affects me violently." Southey shrank back from such agitations. A great Elizabethan poet is described by one of his contemporaries as standing

> Up to the chin in the Pierian flood.

Southey did not wade so far; he stepped down calmly until the smooth waters touched his waist; dipped seven times, and returned to the bank; it was a beautiful and an elevating rite; but the waves sing with lyric lips only in the midmost stream, and he who sings with them, and as swift as they, need not wonder if he sink after a time, faint, breathless, delighted.

Authorship, it must be remembered, was Southey's trade, the business of his life, and this at least he knew how to conduct well. To be a prophet and call down flame from heaven, and disappear in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire is sublime; but prophets can go in the strength of a single meal for more days and nights than one would choose to name in this incredulous age, and, if they eat, there are ravens to bring them food. No ravens brought loaves to Greta Hall, and Southey had an unprophet-like craving for the creature comforts of beef and bread, for wine if it might be had, and at supper for one meditative tumbler of punch or black currant rum. Besides, what ravens were ever pledged to feed a prophet's sisters-in-law, or his

nephews and nieces? Let it be praise enough for much of Southey's performance, that he did good work in workmanlike fashion. To shift knowledge into more convenient positions is to render no unimportant service to mankind. In the gathering of facts, Southey was both swift and patient in an extraordinary degree; he went often alone, and he went far; in the art of exposition he was unsurpassed; and his fine moral feeling and profound sympathy with elementary justice created, as De Quincey has observed, a soul under what else might well be denominated, Miltonically, "the ribs of death." From the mending of his pens to the second reading aloud of his proof-sheets, attending as he read to the fall of each word upon the ear, Southey had a diligent care for everything that served to make his work right. He wrote at a moderate pace; re-wrote; wrote a third time if it seemed desirable; corrected with minute supervision. He accomplished so much, not because he produced with unexampled rapidity, but because he worked regularly, and never fell into a mood of apathy or ennui. No periods of tempestuous vacancy lay between his periods of patient labour. One work always overlapped another—thus, that first idle day, the begetter of so many idle descendants, never came. But let us hear the craftsman giving a lesson in the knack of authorship to his brother, Dr. Henry Southey, who has a notion of writing something on the Crusades:—

Now then, supposing that you will seriously set about the *Crusades*, I will give you such directions in the art of historical book-keeping as may save time and facilitate labour.

Make your writing books in foolscap quarto, and write on only one side of a leaf; draw a line down the margin, marking off space enough for your references, which should be given at

the end of every paragraph;—noting page, book, or chapter of the author referred to. This minuteness is now demanded, and you will yourself find it useful; for in transcribing or in correcting proofs, it is often requisite to turn to the original authorities. Take the best author, that is to say the one that has written most at length of all the *original* authors, upon the particular point of time on which you are employed, and draw up your account from him; then, on the opposite page, correct and amplify this from every other who has written on the same subject. This page should be divided into two columns, one of about two-thirds of its breadth, the other the remaining one. You are thus enabled to *add* to your *additions*.

One of these books you should have for your geography; that is to say, for collecting descriptions of all the principal scenes of action (which must be done from books of travels), their situation, their strength, their previous history, and in the notes, their present state. [Another book—he adds in a subsequent letter—you must keep for the bibliography of your subject.]

These descriptions you can insert in their proper places when you transcribe. Thus, also, you should collect accounts of the different tribes and dynasties which you have occasion to mention. In this manner the information which is only to be got at piecemeal, and oftentimes incidentally, when you are looking for something else, is brought together with least trouble, and almost imperceptibly.

All relative matter, not absolutely essential to the subject, should go in the form of supplementary notes, and these you may make as amusing as you please, the more so, and the more curious, the better. Much trouble is saved by writing them on separate bits of paper, each the half of a quarter of a foolscap sheet,—numbering them, and making an index of them; in this manner they are ready for use when they are wanted.

It was some time before I fell unto this system of book-keeping, and I believe no better can be desired. A Welsh triad might comprehend all the rules of style. Say what you have to say as *perspicuously* as possible, as *briefly* as possible, and as *rememberably* as possible, and take no other thought about it. Omit none of those little circumstances which give life to

narration, and bring old manners, old feelings, and old times before your eyes.

Winter was Southey's harvest season. Then for weeks no visitor knocked at Greta Hall, except perhaps Mr. Wordsworth, who had plodded all the way from Rydal on his indefatigable legs. But in summer interruptions were frequent, and Southey, who had time for everything, had time to spare not only for friends but for strangers. The swarm of lakers was indeed not what it is now-a-days, but to a studious man it was perhaps not less formidable. By Gray's time the secret of the lakes had been found out; and if the visitors were fewer, they were less swift upon the wing, and their rank or fame often entitled them to particular attention. Coroneted coaches rolled into Keswick, luggage-laden; the American arrived sometimes to make sure that Derwentwater would not be missed out of Lake Michigan, sometimes to see King George's laureate; and cultured Americans were particularly welcome to Southey. Long-vacation reading-parties from Oxford and Cambridge—known among the good Cumberland folk as the "cathedrals"—made Keswick a resort. Well for them if provided with an introduction, they were invited to dine at Greta Hall, were permitted to gaze on the choice old Spaniards and to converse with the laureate's stately Edith and her learned cousin. Woe to them if after the entanglements of a Greek chorus or descriptions of the temperate man and the magnanimous man, they sought to restore their tone by a cat-worrying expedition among the cottages of Keswick. Southey's cheek glowed, his eye darkened and flashed if he chanced to witness cruelty; some of the Cambridge "cathedrals" who received a letter concerning cats in July, 1834, may still bear the mark of its leaded thong in their

moral fibre, and be the better for possessing Southey's sign-manual.

A young step-child of Oxford visited Keswick in the winter of 1811-12, and sought the acquaintance of the author of *Thalaba*. Had Southey been as intolerant or as unsympathetic as some have represented him, he could not have endured the society of one so alien in opinion and so outspoken as Shelley. But courtesy, if it were nothing more, was at least part of Southey's self-respect; his intolerance towards persons was in truth towards a certain ideal, a certain group of opinions; when hand touched hand and eye met eye all intolerance vanished, and he was open to every gracious attraction of character and manner. There was much in Shelley that could not fail to interest Southey; both loved poetry, and both felt the proud, secluded grandeur of Landor's verse; both loved men, and thought the world wants mending, though their plans of reform might differ. That Shelley was a rebel expelled from Oxford did not shock Southey, who himself had been expelled from Westminster and rejected at Christ Church. Shelley's opinions were crude and violent, but their spirit was generous, and such opinions held by a youth in his teens generally mean no more than that his brain is working and his heart ardent. Shelley's rash marriage reminded Southey of another marriage, celebrated at Bristol some fifteen years ago, which proved that rashness is not always folly. The young man's admiration of *Thalaba* spoke well for him; and certainly during the earlier weeks of their intercourse there was on Shelley's part a becoming deference to one so much his superior in years and in learning, deference to one who had achieved much while Shelley still only dreamed of achievement. Southey thought he saw in the revolutionary en-

thusiast an image of his former self. "Here," he says, "is a man at Keswick who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794. His name is Shelley, son to the member for Shoreham. . . . . At present he has got to the Pantheistic stage of philosophy, and in the course of a week I expect he will be a Berkeleyan, for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley. It has surprised him a good deal to meet, for the first time in his life, with a man who perfectly understands him and does him full justice. I tell him that all the difference between us is that he is nineteen and I am thirty-seven; and I daresay it will not be very long before I shall succeed in convincing him that he may be a true philosopher and do a great deal of good with 6000*l.* a year; the thought of which troubles him a great deal more at present than ever the want of sixpence (for I have known such a want) did me." There were other differences between Robert Southey and the inconstant star that passed by Greta Hall than that of years. Southey had quickly learned to put a bound to his desires, and within that bound to work out for himself a possession of measureless worth. It seemed to him part of a man's virtue to adhere loyally to the bond signed for each of us when we enter life. Is our knowledge limited,—then let us strive within those limits. Can we never lay hands on the absolute good—then let us cherish the good things that are ours. Do we hold our dearest possessions on a limited tenure—that is hard, but is it not in the bond? How faint a loyalty is his who merely yields obedience perforce; let us rather cast in our will, unadulterate and whole, with that of our divine Leader; *sursum corda*—there is a heaven above. But Shelley—the nympholept of some radiant ante-natal sphere—fled through his brief years ever in pursuit of his lost lady of

light; and for him loyalty to the bond of life seemed to mean a readiness to forget all things, however cherished, so soon as they had fulfilled their service of speeding him on towards the unattainable. It could not but be that men living under rules so diverse should before long find themselves far asunder. But they parted in 1812 in no spirit of ill-will. Southey was already a state-pensioner and a champion of the party of order in the *Quarterly Review;* this did not prevent the young apostle of liberty and fraternity from entering his doors, and enjoying Mrs. Southey's tea-cakes. Irish affairs were earnestly discussed, but Southey, who had written generously of Emmett both in his verse and in the *Quarterly*, could not be hostile to one whose illusions were only over-sanguine; and while the veritable Southey was before Shelley's eyes, he could not discern the dull hireling, the venomous apostate, the cold-blooded assassin of freedom conjured up by Byron and others to bear Southey's name.

Three years later Shelley presented his *Alastor* to the laureate, and Southey duly acknowledged the gift. The elder poet was never slow to recognize genius in young men, but conduct was to him of higher importance than genius; he deplored some acts in Shelley's life which seemed to result directly from opinions professed at Keswick in 1811—opinions then interpreted as no more than the disdain of checks felt by every spirited boy. Southey heard no more from him until a letter came from Pisa inquiring whether Shelley's former entertainer at Keswick were his recent critic of the *Quarterly Review*, with added comments, courteous but severe, on Southey's opinions. The reply was that Southey had not written the paper, and had never in any of his writings alluded to Shelley in any way. A second letter followed on each side, the elder man plead-

ing, exhorting, warning; the younger justifying himself, and returning to the attack. "There the correspondence ended. On Shelley's part it was conducted with the courtesy which was natural to him; on mine, in the spirit of one who was earnestly admonishing a fellow-creature."

Much of Southey's time—his most valued possession—was given to his correspondents. Napoleon's plan of answering letters, according to Bourrienne, was to let them lie unopened for six weeks, by which time nine out of ten had answered themselves, or had been answered by history. Coleridge's plan—says De Quincey—was shorter; he opened none, and answered none. To answer all forthwith was the habit of Southey. Thinking doubtless of their differences in such minor moralities of life, Coleridge writes of his brother-in-law:—"Always employed, his friends find him always at leisure. No less punctual in trifles, than steadfast in the performance of highest duties, he inflicts none of those small pains which irregular men scatter about them, and which in the aggregate so often become formidable obstacles both to happiness and utility; while on the contrary he bestows all the pleasures and inspires all that ease of mind on those around or connected with him, which perfect consistency and (if such a word might be framed) absolute *reliability*, equally in small as in great concerns, cannot but inspire and bestow; when this too is softened without being weakened by kindness and gentleness." Odd indeed were some of the communications for which the poet laureate, the Tory reformer, and the loyal son of the Church was the mark. Now a clergyman writes to furnish him with Scriptural illustrations of *Thalaba;* now another clergyman favours him with an ingenious parallel between Kehama and Nebuchadnezzar; now some anonymous person seriously urges on Southey

his duty of making a new version of the Psalms, and laying it before the King to be approved and appointed to be sung in churches; now a lunatic poet desires his brother to procure for his title-page the names of Messrs. Longman and Rees; now a poor woman, wife to a blind Homer, would have him led carefully to the summit of Parnassus; now a poor French devil volunteers to translate *Roderick* if the author will have the goodness to send him a copy—even a defective copy—which he pledges himself religiously to return; now a Yankee who keeps an exhibition at Philadelphia, modestly asks for Southey's painted portrait "which is very worthy a place in my collection;" now a herdsman in the vale of Clwyd requests permission to send specimens of prose and verse—his highest ambition is the acquaintance of learned men; now the Rev. Peter Hall begs to inform Southey that he has done more harm to the cause of religion than any writer of the age; now a lover requests him to make an acrostic on the name of a young lady—the lover's rival has beaten him in writing verses; enclosed is the honorarium. Southey's amiability at this point gave way; he did not write the acrostic, and the money he spent on blankets for poor women in Keswick. A society for the suppression of albums was proposed by Southey; yet sometimes he was captured in the gracious mood. Samuel Simpson of Liverpool begs for a few lines in his handwriting "to fill a vacancy in his collection of autographs, without which his series must remain for ever most incomplete." The laureate replies:—

> Inasmuch as you Sam, a descendant of Sim,
> For collecting handwritings have taken a whim,
> And to me, Robert Southey, petition have made,
> In a civil and nicely-penned letter—post-paid,—

That I to your album so gracious would be
As to fill up a page there appointed for me,
Five couplets I send you, by aid of the Nine—
They will cost you in postage a penny a line,
At Keswick, October the sixth, they were done,
One thousand eight hundred and twenty and one.

Some of Southey's distractions were of his own inviting. Soon after his arrival at Keswick, a tiny volume of poems entitled *Clifton Grove* attracted his attention; its author was an undergraduate of Cambridge. The Monthly Review having made the discovery that it rhymed in one place *boy* and *sky* dismissed the book contemptuously. Southey could not bear to think that the hopes of a lad of promise should be blasted, and he wrote to Henry Kirke White, encouraging him and offering him help towards a future volume. The cruel dulness of the reviewer sat heavily on the poor boy's spirits, and these unexpected words of cheer came with most grateful effect. It soon appeared, however, that Southey's services must be slight, for his new acquaintance was taken out of his hands by Mr. Simeon, the nursing-father of Evangelicalism. At no time had Southey any leanings toward the Clapham Sect; and so while he tried to be of use to Kirke White indirectly, their correspondence ceased. When the lad, in every way lacking pith and substance, and ripening prematurely in a heated atmosphere, drooped and died, Southey was not willing that he should be altogether forgotten; he wrote offering to look over whatever papers there might be, and to give an opinion on them "Down came a box-full," he tells Duppa, "the sight of which literally made my heart ache, and my eyes overflow, for never did I behold such proofs of human industry. To make short, I took the matter up with interest, collected his letters, and have, at the expense of more time than

such a poor fellow as myself can very well afford, done what his family are very grateful for, and what I think the world will thank me for too. Of course I have done it gratuitously. . . . That I should become and that voluntarily too, an editor of Methodistical and Calvinistic letters, is a thing which when I think of excites the same sort of smile that the thought of my pension does." A brief statement that his own views on religion differed widely from those of Kirke White sufficed to save Southey's integrity. The genius of the dead poet he over-rated; it was an error which the world has since found time to correct.

This was but one of a series of many instances in which Southey, stemming the pressure of his own engagements, asserted the right to be generous of his time and strength and substance to those who had need of such help as a sound heart and a strong arm can give. William Roberts, a Bristol bank-clerk, dying of consumption at nineteen, left his only possession, some manuscript poems, in trust to be published for the benefit of a sister whom he passionately loved. Southey was consulted, and at once bestirred himself on behalf of the projected volume. Herbert Knowles, an orphan lad at school in Yorkshire, had hoped to go as a sizar to St. John's; his relations were unable to send him; could he help himself by publishing a poem? might he dedicate it to the laureate? The poem came to Southey, who found it "brimful of power and of promise;" he represented to Herbert the folly of publishing, promised ten pounds himself and procured from Rogers and Earl Spencer twenty more. Herbert Knowles, in a wise and manly letter, begged that great things might not be expected of him; he would not be idle, his University career should be at least respectable: "Suffice it, then, to say *I thank you from my heart;* let time and my future conduct

tell the rest." Death came to arbitrate between his hopes and fears. James Dusautoy, another schoolboy, one of ten children of a retired officer, sent specimens of his verse, asking Southey's opinion on certain poetical plans; his friends thought the law the best profession for him; how could he make literature help him forward in his profession? Southey again advised against publication, but by a well-timed effort enabled him to enter Emanuel College. Dusautoy, after a brilliant promise, took fever, died, and was buried, in acknowledgment of his character and talents, in the college cloisters. When at Harrogate in the summer of 1827, Southey received a letter, written with much modesty and good feeling, from John Jones, an old serving-man; he enclosed a poem on "The Redbreast," and would take the liberty, if permitted, to offer other manuscripts for inspection. Touches of true observation and natural feeling in the verses on the little bird with "look oblique and prying head and gentle affability" pleased Southey, and he told his humble applicant to send his manuscript book, warning him, however, not to expect that such poems would please the public—"the time for them was gone by, and whether the public had grown wiser in these matters or not, it had certainly become less tolerant and less charitable." By procuring subscribers and himself contributing an Introductory Essay on the lives and works of our Uneducated Poets, Southey secured a slender fortune for the worthy old man, who laid the table none the less punctually because he loved Shakspere and the Psalter, or carried in his head some simple rhymes of his own. It pleased Southey to show how much intellectual pleasure and moral improvement connected with such pleasure are within reach of the humblest; thus a lesson was afforded to those who would have the March of Intellect beaten

only to the tune of *Ça ira.* "Before I conclude"—so the Introduction draws to an end—"I must, in my own behalf, give notice to all whom it may concern that I, Robert Southey, Poet Laureate, being somewhat advanced in years, and having business enough of my own fully to occupy as much time as can be devoted to it, consistently with a due regard to health, do hereby decline perusing or inspecting any manuscript from any person whatsoever, and desire that no application on that score may be made to me from this time forth; this resolution, which for most just cause is taken and here notified, being, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, not to be changed."

It was some time after this public announcement that a hand, which may have trembled while yet it was very brave and resolute, dropped into the little post-office at Haworth in Yorkshire a packet for Robert Southey. His bold truthfulness, his masculine self-control, his strong heart, his domestic temper sweet and venerable, his purity of manners, a certain sweet austerity, attracted to him women of fine sensibility and genius who would fain escape from their own falterings and temerities under the authority of a faithful director. Already Maria del Occidente, "the most impassioned and most imaginative of all poetesses," had poured into his ear the tale of her slighted love. Newly come from Paris, and full of enthusiasm for the Poles, she hastened to Keswick to see in person her sympathetic adviser; she proved, says Southey, a most interesting person of the mildest and gentlest manners. With him she left, on returning to America, her *Zophiel* in manuscript, the publication of which he superintended. "*Zophiel*, Southey says, is by some Yankee woman"—Charles Lamb breaks forth—"as if there ever had been

a woman capable of anything so great!" Now, in 1837, a woman of finer spirit and capable of higher things than *Zophiel*, addressed a letter to Robert Southey, asking his judgment of her powers as disclosed in the poems which she forwarded. For some weeks Charlotte Brontë waited, until almost all hope of a reply was lost. At length the verdict came. Charlotte Brontë's verse was assuredly written with her left hand; her passionate impulses, crossed and checked by fiery fiats of the will, would not mould themselves into little stanzas; the little stanzas must be correct, therefore they must reject such irregular heavings and swift repressions of the heart. Southey's delay in replying had been caused by absence from home. A little personal knowledge of a poet in the decline of life might have tempered her enthusiasm; yet he is neither a disappointed nor a discontented man; she will never hear from him any chilling sermons on the text, All is vanity; the faculty of verse she possesses in no inconsiderable degree; but this since the beginning of the century has grown to be no rare possession; let her beware of making literature her profession, check day-dreams, and find her chief happiness in her womanly duties; then she may write poetry for its own sake, not in a spirit of emulation, not through a passion for celebrity; the less celebrity is aimed at the more it is likely to be deserved. "Mr. Southey's letter," said Charlotte Brontë, many years later, "was kind and admirable, a little stringent, but it did me good." She wrote again, striving to repress a palpitating joy and pride in the submission to her director's counsel, and the sacrifice of her cherished hopes; telling him more of her daily life, of her obedience to the day's duty, her efforts to be sensible and sober: "I had not ventured," she says, "to hope for such a reply; so

considerate in its tone, so noble in its spirit." Once more Southey wrote hoping that she would let him see her at the Lakes: "You would then think of me afterwards with the more good-will, because you would perceive that there is neither severity nor moroseness in the state of mind to which years and observation have brought me. . . . . And now, madam, God bless you. Farewell, and believe me to be your sincere friend, Robert Southey." It was during a visit to the Lakes that Charlotte Brontë told her biographer of these letters. But Southey lay at rest in Crosthwaite churchyard.

"My days among the dead are past,"—Southey wrote, but it is evident that the living, and not those of his own household alone, claimed no inconsiderable portion of his time. Indeed it would not be untrue to assert that few men have been more genuinely and consistently social, that few men ever yielded themselves more constantly to the pleasures of companionship. But the society he loved best was that of old and chosen friends, or if new friends, one at a time and only one. Next to romping with my children, he said, I enjoy a tête-à-tête conversation with an *old* friend or a *new*. "With one I can talk of familiar subjects which we have discussed in former years, and with the other, if he have any brains, I open what to me is a new mine of thought." Miscellaneous company to a certain extent disordered and intoxicated him. He felt no temptation to say a great deal, but he would often say things strongly and emphatically, which were better left unsaid. "In my hearty hatred of assentation I commit faults of the opposite kind. Now I am sure to find this out myself and to get out of humour with myself; what prudence I have is not ready on demand; and so it is that the society of any except my friends though it may be sweet in the mouth is

bitter in the belly." When Coleridge, in their arguments, allowed him a word, Southey made up in weight for what was wanting in measure; he saw one fact quickly, and darted at it like a greyhound. De Quincey has described his conversation as less flowing and expansive than that of Wordsworth—more apt to clothe itself in a keen, sparkling, aphoristic form; consequently sooner coming to an abrupt close; "the style of his mind naturally prompts him to adopt a trenchant, pungent, aculeated form of terse, glittering, stenographic sentences—sayings which have the air of laying down the law without any *locus penitentiæ* or privilege of appeal, but are not meant to do so." The same manner tempered and chastened by years can be recognized in the picture of Southey drawn by his friend Sir Henry Taylor:—

The characteristics of his manner, as of his appearance, were lightness and strength, an easy and happy composure as the accustomed mood, and much mobility at the same time, so that he could be readily excited into any degree of animation in discourse, speaking, if the subject moved him much, with extraordinary fire and force, though always in light, laconic sentences. When so moved, the fingers of his right hand often rested against his mouth and quivered through nervous susceptibility. But excitable as he was in conversation, he was never angry or irritable; nor can there be any greater mistake concerning him, than that into which some persons have fallen when they have inferred, from the fiery vehemence with which he could give utterance to moral anger in verse or prose, that he was personally ill-tempered or irascible. He was in truth a man whom it was hardly possible to quarrel with or offend personally and face to face. . . . . He was averse from argumentation and would commonly quit a subject when it was passing into that shape, with a quiet and good-humoured indication of the view in which he rested. He talked most, and with most interest about books, and about public affairs; less, indeed hardly at all, about the

characters and qualities of men in private life. In the society of strangers or of acquaintances, he seemed to take more interest in the subjects spoken of than in the persons present, his manner being that of natural courtesy and general benevolence without distinction of individuals. Had there been some tincture of social vanity in him, perhaps he would have been brought into closer relations with those whom he met in society; but though invariably kind and careful of their feelings, he was indifferent to the manner in which they regarded him, or (as the phrase is) to his *effect* in society; and they might perhaps be conscious that the kindness they received was what flowed naturally and inevitably to all, that they had nothing to give in return which was of value to him, and that no individual relations were established.

How deep and rich Southey's social nature was his published correspondence, some four or five thousand printed pages, tells sufficiently. These letters, addressed for the most part to good old friends, are indeed genial, liberal of sympathy, and expecting sympathy in return, pleasantly egoistic, grave, playful, wise, pathetic with a kind of stringent pathos showing through checks imposed by the wiser and stronger will. Southey did not squander abroad the treasures of his affection. To lavish upon casual acquaintance the outward and visible signs of friendship seemed to him a profaning of the mystery of manly love. "Your feelings," he writes to Coleridge, "go naked, I cover mine with a bear-skin; I will not say that you harden yours by your mode, but I am sure that mine are the warmer for their clothing." With strangers a certain neutral courtesy served to protect his inner self like the low leaves of his own holly tree:

> Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen
> Wrinkled and keen;
> No grazing cattle through their prickly round
> Can reach to wound;

but to those of whose goodness and love he was well assured, there were no protecting spines:

> Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be
> Like the high leaves upon the Holly Tree.

"Old friends and old books," he says, "are the best things that this world affords (I like old wine also), and in these I am richer than most men (the wine excepted)." In the group of Southey's friends, what first strikes one is not that they are men of genius—although the group includes Wordsworth and Scott, and Henry Taylor—but that they are good men. No one believed more thoroughly than Southey that goodness is a better thing than genius; yet he required in his associates some high excellence, extraordinary kindness of disposition or strength of moral character, if not extraordinary intellect. To knit his friends in a circle was his ardent desire; in the strength of his affections time and distance made no change. An old College friend, Lightfoot, to visit Southey made the longest journey of his life; it was eight and twenty years since they had met. When their hands touched, Lightfoot trembled like an aspen-leaf. "I believe," says Southey, "no men ever met more cordially after so long a separation, or enjoyed each other's society more. I shall never forget the manner in which he first met me, nor the tone in which he said 'that, having now seen me, he should return home and die in peace.'" But of all friends he was most at ease with his dear Dapple, Grosvenor Bedford, who suited for every mood of mirth and sorrow. When Mrs. Southey had fallen into her sad decay, and the once joyous house was melancholy and silent, Southey turned for comfort to Bedford. Still some of their Rabelaisian humour remained, and all their warmth of

brotherly affection. "My father," says Cuthbert Southey, "was never tired of talking into Mr. Bedford's trumpet." And in more joyous days, what noise and nonsense did they not make! "Oh! Grosvenor," exclaims Southey, "is it not a pity that two men who love nonsense so cordially and naturally and *bonâfidically* as you and I, should be three hundred miles asunder? For my part I insist upon it that there is no sense so good as your honest genuine nonsense."

A goodly company of friends becomes familiar to us as we read Southey's correspondence; Wynn, wherever he was, "always doing something else," yet able in the midst of politics and business to find time to serve an old schoolfellow; Rickman, full of practical suggestions, and accurate knowledge and robust benevolence; John May, unfailing in kindness and fidelity; Lamb for play and pathos, and subtle criticism glancing amid the puns; William Taylor for culture and literary theory, and paradox and polysyllables; Landor for generous admiration, and kindred enthusiasms and kindred prejudices; Elmsley and Lightfoot and Danvers for love and happy memories; Senhora Barker, the Bhow Begum, for frank familiarities, and warm, womanly services; Caroline Bowles for rarer sympathy and sacreder hopes and fears; Henry Taylor for spiritual sonship as of a son who is also an equal; and Grosvenor Bedford, for everything great and small, glad and sad, wise and foolish.

No literary rivalries or jealousies ever interrupted for a moment any friendship of Southey. Political and religious differences, which in strangers were causes of grave offence, seemed to melt away when the heretic or erring statist was a friend. But if success, fashion, flattery tested a man, and proved him wanting, as seemed to be the case

with Humphrey Davy, his affection grew cold; and an habitual dereliction of social duty, such as that of Coleridge, could not but transform Southey's feeling of love to one of condemning sorrow. To his great contemporaries, Scott, Landor, Wordsworth, his admiration was freely given. "Scott," he writes, "is very ill. He suffers dreadfully; but bears his sufferings with admirable equanimity. . . . God grant that he may recover! He is a noble and generous-hearted creature, whose like we shall not look upon again." Of Wordsworth: "A greater poet than Wordsworth there never has been, nor ever will be:" "Two or three generations must pass before the public affect to admire such poets as Milton and Wordsworth. Of such men the world scarcely produces one in a millennium." With indignation crossed by a gleam of humour, he learnt that Ebenezer Elliott, his pupil in the art of verse, had stepped forward as the lyrist of radicalism; but the feeling could not be altogether anger with which he remembered that earnest face, once seen by him at a Sheffield inn, its pale grey eyes full of fire and meaning, its expression suiting well with Elliott's frankness of manner, and simplicity of character. William Taylor was one of the liberals of liberal Norwich, and dangled abroad whatever happened to be the newest paradox in religion. But neither his radicalism, nor his Pyrrhonism, nor his paradoxes could estrange Southey. The last time the oddly-assorted pair met was in Taylor's house; the student of German criticism had found some theological novelty, and wished to draw his guest into argument; Southey parried the thrusts good-humouredly, and at last put an end to them with the words, "Taylor, come and see me at Keswick. We will ascend Skiddaw, where I shall have you nearer heaven, and we will then discuss such questions as these."

In the year 1823 one of his oldest friends made a public attack on Southey, and that friend the gentlest and sweetest-natured of them all. In a *Quarterly* article Southey had spoken of the Essays of Elia as a book which wanted only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it was original. He had intended to alter the expression in the proof-sheet, but no proof-sheet was ever sent. Lamb, already pained by references to his writings in the *Quarterly*, some of which he erroneously ascribed to Southey, was deeply wounded. "He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights, that meant no harm to religion." A long expostulation addressed by Elia to Robert Southey, Esq., appeared in the London Magazine for October, only a portion of which is retained in the Elia Essays under the title of "The Tombs of the Abbey;" for though Lamb had playfully resented Coleridge's salutation, "my gentle-hearted Charles," his heart was indeed gentle, and could not endure the pain of its own wrath; among the memorials of the dead in Westminster he finds his right mind, his truer self once more; he forgets the grave aspect with which Southey looked awful on his poor friend, and spends his indignation harmless as summer lightning over the heads of a Dean and Chapter. Southey, seeing the announcement of a letter addressed to him by Lamb, had expected a sheaf of friendly pleasantries; with surprise he learnt what pain his words had caused. He hastened to explain; had Lamb intimated his feelings in private, he would have tried, by a passage in the ensuing *Quarterly*, to efface the impression unhappily created; he ended with a declaration of unchanged affection, and a proposal to call on Lamb. "On my part," Southey said, "there was not even a momentary feeling of

anger;" he at once understood the love, the error, the soreness, and the repentance awaiting a being so composed of goodness as Elia. "Dear Southey"—runs the answer of Lamb—"the kindness of your note has melted away the mist that was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. . . . . I wish both magazine and review were at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so, for this folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at the time. I will make up courage to see you, however, any day next week. We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification; she will hate to see us; but come and heap embers; we deserve it, I for what I have done, and she for being my sister. Do come early in the day by sunlight that you may see my Milton. . . . . Your penitent C. Lamb."

At Bristol in 1808 Southey met for the first time the man of all others whom he most desired to see, the only man living, he says, "of whose praise I was ambitious, or whose censure would have humbled me." This was Walter Savage Landor. *Madoc*, on which Southey had built his hope of renown as a poet, had been published, and had been coldly received; *Kehama*, which had been begun, consequently now stood still. Their author could indeed, as he told Sir George Beaumont, be contented with posthumous fame, but it was impossible to be contented with posthumous bread and cheese. "St. Cecilia herself could not have played the organ if there had been nobody to blow the bellows for her." At this moment, when he turned sadly and bravely from poetry to more profitable work he first looked on Landor. "I never saw any

one more unlike myself," he writes, "in every prominent part of human character, nor any one who so cordially and instinctively agreed with me on so many of the most important subjects. I have often said before we met, that I would walk forty miles to see him, and having seen him, I would gladly walk fourscore to see him again. He talked of *Thalaba*, and I told him of the series of mythological poems which I had planned, ... and also told him for what reason they had been laid aside;—in plain English, that I could not afford to write them. Landor's reply was, 'Go on with them, and I will pay for printing them, as many as you will write, and as many copies as you please.'" The princely offer stung Southey, as he says, to the very core; not that he thought of accepting that offer, but the generous words were themselves a deed and claimed a return. He rose earlier each morning to carry on his *Kehama*, without abstracting time from better-paid task-work; it advanced, and duly as each section of this poem, and subsequently of his *Roderick*, came to be written, it was transcribed for the friend whose sympathy and admiration were a golden reward. To be praised by one's peers is indeed happiness. Landor, liberal of applause, was keen in suggestion and exact in censure. Both friends were men of ardent feelings, though one had tamed himself, while the other never could be tamed; both often gave their feelings a vehement utterance. On many matters they thought in the main alike—on the grand style in human conduct, on the principles of the poetic art, on Spanish affairs, on Catholicism. The secret of Landor's high-poised dignity in verse had been discovered by Southey; he, like Landor, aimed at a classical purity of diction; he, like Landor, loved, as a shaper of imaginative forms, to embody in an act, or an

incident, the virtue of some eminent moment of human passion, and to give it fixity by sculptured phrase; only the repression of a fiery spirit is more apparent in Landor's monumental lines than in Southey's. With certain organic resemblances, and much community of sentiment, there were large differences between the two, so that when they were drawn together in sympathy, each felt as if he had annexed a new province. Landor rejoiced that the first persons who shared his turret at Llanthony were Southey and his wife; again, in 1817, the two friends were together for three days at Como, after Southey had endured his prime affliction—the death of his son:—

> Grief had swept over him; days darkened round;
> Bellagio, Valintelvi smiled in vain,
> And Monte Rosa from Helvetia far
> Advanced to meet us, wild in majesty
> Above the glittering crests of giant sons
> Station'd around . . . in vain too! all in vain.

Two years later the warm-hearted friend writes from Pistoia, rejoicing in Southey's joy: "Thank God! Tears came into my eyes on seeing that you were blessed with a son." To watch the happiness of children was Landor's highest delight, to share in such happiness was Southey's, and Arnold and Cuthbert formed a new bond between their fathers. In 1836, when Southey, in his sixty-third year, guided his son through the scenes of his boyhood, several delightful days were spent at Clifton with Landor. I never knew a man of brighter genius or of kinder heart, said Southey; and of Landor in earlier years: "He does more than any of the gods of all my mythologies, for his very words are thunder and lightning—such is the power and splendour with which they burst out." Landor responded with a majestic enthusiasm about his friend,

who seemed to him no less noble a man than admirable a writer :—

> No firmer breast than thine hath Heaven
> To poet, sage, or hero given:
> No heart more tender, none more just,
> To that He largely placed in trust:
> Therefore shalt thou, whatever date
> Of years be thine, with soul elate
> Rise up before the Eternal throne,
> And hear, in God's own voice, "Well done."

That "Well done" greeted Southey many years before Landor's imperial head was laid low. In the last letter from his friend received by Southey—already the darkness was fast closing in—he writes, "If any man living is ardent for your welfare, I am; whose few and almost worthless merits your generous heart has always overvalued, and whose infinite and great faults it has been too ready to overlook. I will write to you often, now I learn that I may do it inoffensively; well remembering that among the names you have exalted is Walter Landor." Alas! to reply was now beyond the power of Southey; still he held *Gebir* in his hands oftener than any other volume of poetry, and while thought and feeling lived, fed upon its beauty. "It is very seldom now," Caroline Southey wrote at a later date, "that he ever names any person: but this morning, before he left his bed, I heard him repeating softly to himself *Landor, ay, Landor.*"

"If it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all" —this was ever present to Southey during the happy days of labour and rest in Greta Hall. While he was disposing his books so as to make the comeliest show, and delighting in their goodly ranks, while he looked into the radiant faces of his children, and loved their innocent brightness, he yet

knew that the day of detachment was approaching. There was nothing in such a thought which stirred Southey to a rebellious mood; had he not set his seal to the bond of life? How his heart rested in his home, only his own words can tell; even a journey to London seemed too long:—"Oh, dear; oh, dear! there is such a comfort in one's old coat and old shoes, one's own chair and own fireside, one's own writing-desk and own library,—with a little girl climbing up to my neck, and saying, 'Don't go to London, papa—you must stay with Edith'; and a little boy, whom I have taught to speak the language of cats, dogs, cuckoos, and jackasses, &c., before he can articulate a word of his own;—there is such a comfort in all these things, that *transportation* to London for four or five weeks seems a heavier punishment than any sins of mine deserve." Nor did his spirit of boyish merriment abate until overwhelming sorrow weighed him down: "I am quite as noisy as I ever was," he writes to Lightfoot, "and should take as much delight as ever in showering stones through the hole of the staircase against your room door, and hearing with what hearty good earnest 'you fool' was vociferated in indignation against me in return. O, dear Lightfoot, what a blessing it is to have a boy's heart! it is as great a blessing in carrying one through this world, as to have a child's spirit will be in fitting us for the next." But Southey's light-heartedness was rounded by a circle of earnest acquiescence in the law of mortal life; a clear-obscure of faith as pure and calm and grave as the heavens of a midsummer night. At thirty he writes:—"No man was ever more contented with his lot than I am, for few have ever had more enjoyments, and none had ever better or worthier hopes. Life, therefore, is sufficiently dear to me, and long life desirable, that I may

accomplish all which I design. But yet, I could be well content that the next century were over, and my part fairly at an end, having been gone well through. Just as at school one wished the school-days over, though we were happy enough there, because we expected more happiness and more liberty when we were to be our own masters, might lie as much later in the morning as we pleased, have no bounds and do no exercise,—just so do I wish that my exercises were over." At thirty-five: "Almost the only wish I ever give utterance to is that the next hundred years were over. It is not that the uses of this world seem to me weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,—God knows far otherwise! No man can be better contented with his lot. My paths are paths of pleasantness. . . . . Still the instability of human happiness is ever before my eyes; I long for the certain and the permanent." "My notions about life are much the same as they are about travelling—there is a good deal of amusement on the road, but, after all, one wants to be at rest." At forty: "My disposition is invincibly cheerful, and this alone would make me a cheerful man if I were not so from the tenor of my life; yet I doubt whether the strictest Carthusian has the thought of death more habitually in his mind."

Such was Southey's constant temper; to some persons it may seem an unfortunate one; to some it may be practically unintelligible. But those who accept of the feast of life freely, who enter with a bounding foot its measures of beauty and of joy,—glad to feel all the while the serviceable sackcloth next the skin—will recognize in Southey an instructed brother of the Renunciants' rule.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGES AND EVENTS, 1803—1843.

In October, 1805, Southey started with his friend Elmsley for a short tour in Scotland. On their way northward they stopped three days at Ashestiel. There, in a small house, rising amid its old-fashioned garden, with pastoral hills all around, and the Tweed winding at the meadow's end, lived Walter Scott. It was the year in which old Border song had waked up, with ampler echoings, in the *Lay of the Last Ministrel*, and Scott was already famous. Earlier in the year he had visited Grasmere, and had stood upon the summit of Helvellyn with Wordsworth and Davy by his side The three October days, with their still, misty brightness, went by in full enjoyment. Southey had brought with him a manuscript containing sundry metrical romances of the fifteenth century, on which his host pored, as far as courtesy and the hours allowed, with much delight; and the guests saw Melrose, that old romance in stone so dear to Scott, went salmon-spearing on the Tweed, dined on a hare snapped up before their eyes by Percy and Douglas, and visited Yarrow. From Ashestiel they proceeded to Edinburgh. Southey looked coldly on the grey metropolis; its new city seemed a kind of Puritan Bath, which worshipped propriety instead of pleasure; but the old town seen amid the slant light of a wild red sunset

impressed him much, its vast irregular outline of roofs and chimneys rising against tumultuous clouds like the dismantled fragments of a giant's palace. Southey was prepared to find himself and his friends of the Lakes persons of higher stature than the Scotch *literatuli*. Before accepting an invitation to meet him at supper, Jeffrey politely forwarded the proof of an unpublished review of *Madoc;* if the poet preferred that his reviewer should not present himself, Mr. Jeffrey would deny himself the pleasure of Mr. Southey's acquaintance. Southey was not to be daunted, and, as he tells it himself, felt nothing but good-humour on beholding a bright-faced homunculus of five-foot-one, the centre of an attentive circle, ēēnunciating with North-British ēēlocution his doctrines on taste. The lively little gentleman, who thought to crush *The Excursion*—he could as easily crush Skiddaw, said Southey—received from the author of *Madoc* a courtesy *de haut en bas* intended to bring home to his consciousness the fact that he was—but five-foot-one. The bland lips of the gods who looked down on auld Reekie that evening smiled at the magnanimity alike of poet and critic.

Two years later (1807), differences having arisen between the proprietors and the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, it was in contemplation to alter the management, and Longman wrote requesting Southey to review him two or three articles "in his best manner." Southey did not keep firkins of criticism of first and second brand, but he was not unwilling to receive ten guineas a sheet instead of seven pounds. When, however, six months later, Scott urged his friend to contribute, Judge Jeffrey still sat on the bench of the *Edinburgh Review*, hanging, drawing, and quartering luckless poets with undiminished vivacity. It was of no use for Scott to assure Southey

that the homunculus, notwithstanding his flippant attacks on *Madoc* and *Thalaba*, had the most sincere respect for their author and his talents. Setting all personal feelings aside, an irreconcilable difference, Southey declared, between Jeffrey and himself upon every great principle of taste, morality, and policy, occasioned a difficulty which could not be removed. Within less than twelve months Scott, alienated by the deepening Whiggery of the Review, and by more personal causes, had ceased to contribute, and opposite his name in the list of subscribers Constable had written, with indignant notes of exclamation, "*Stopt ! ! !*" John Murray, the young bookseller in Fleet Street, had been to Ashestiel; in "dern privacie" a bold complot was laid; why should the Edinburgh clique carry it before them? The spirit of England was still sound, and would respond to loyalty, patriotism, the good traditions of Church and State, the temper of gentlemen, courage, scholarship; Gifford, of the Anti-Jacobin, had surely a sturdier arm than Jeffrey; George Ellis would remember his swashing-blow; there were the Roses, and Matthias, and Heber; a rival Review should see the light, and that speedily; "a good plot, good friends, and full of expectation—an excellent plot, very good friends."

Southey was invited to write on Spanish affairs for the first number of the *Quarterly* (Feb. 1809). His political opinions had undergone a considerable alteration since the days of Pantisocracy and *Joan of Arc*. The Reign of Terror had not caused a violent reaction against the doctrine of a Republic, nor did he soon cease to sympathize with France. But his hopes were dashed; it was plain that "the millennium would not come this bout." Man as he is appeared more greedy, ignorant, and dangerous than he had appeared before, though man as he may be

was still a being composed of knowledge, virtue, and love. The ideal republic receded into the dimness of unborn time; no doubt—so Southey maintained to the end—a republic is the best form of government in itself, as a sun-dial is simpler and surer than a time-piece; but the sun of reason does not always shine, and therefore complicated systems of government, containing checks and counter-checks, are needful in old countries for the present; better systems are no doubt conceivable—for better men. "Mr. Southey's mind," wrote Hazlitt, "is essentially sanguine, even to over-weeningness. It is prophetic of good; it cordially embraces it; it casts a longing, lingering look after it, even when it is gone for ever. He cannot bear to give up the thought of happiness, his confidence in his fellow-men, when all else despair. It is the very element 'where he must live or have no life at all.'" This is true; we sacrifice too much to prudence—Southey said when not far from sixty—and in fear of incurring the danger or the reproach of enthusiasm, too often we stifle the holiest impulses of the understanding and the heart. Still at sixty he believed in a state of society actually to be realized as superior to English society in the nineteenth century, as that itself is superior to the condition of the tattooed Britons, or of the Northern Pirates from whom we have descended. But the error of supposing such a state of society too near, of fancying that there is a short road to it, seemed to him a pernicious error, seducing the young and generous into an alliance with whatever is flagitious and detestable.

It was not until the Peace of Amiens (1802), that Southey was restored in feeling to his own country. From that hour the new departure in his politics may be said to date. The honour of England became as dear to him as

to her most patriotic son; and in the man who had subjugated the Swiss Republic, and thrown into a dungeon the champion of Negro independence, and slaughtered his prisoners at Jaffa, he indignantly refused to recognize the representative of the generous principles of 1789. To him, as to Wordsworth, the very life of virtue in mankind seemed to dwell in the struggle against the military despotism which threatened to overwhelm the whole civilized world. Whatever went along with a spirited war-policy Southey could accept. It appeared to himself that his views and hopes had changed precisely because the heart and soul of his wishes had continued the same. To remove the obstacles which retard the improvement of mankind was the one object to which, first and last, he gave his most earnest vows. "This has been the pole-star of my course; the needle has shifted according to the movements of the state vessel wherein I am embarked, but the direction to which it points has always been the same. I did not fall into the error of those who, having been the friends of France when they imagined that the cause of liberty was implicated in her success, transferred their attachment from the Republic to the Military Tyranny in which it ended, and regarded with complacency the progress of oppression because France was the oppressor. 'They had turned their faces toward the East in the morning to worship the rising sun, and in the evening they were looking eastward, obstinately affirming that still the sun was there.' I, on the contrary, altered my position as the world went round."[1]

Wordsworth has described in memorable words the sudden exaltation of the spirit of resistance to Napoleon, its change from the temper of fortitude to enthusiasm animated by hope when the Spanish people rose against

[1] The words quoted by Southey are his own, written in 1809.

their oppressors. "From that moment," he says, "this corruptible put on incorruption and this mortal put on immortality." Southey had learned to love the people of the Peninsula; he had almost naturalized himself among them by his studies of Spanish and Portuguese history and literature. Now there was in him a new birth of passion at a period of life when ordinarily the crust of custom begins to encase our free spirits. All his moral ardour flowed in the same current with his political enthusiasm; in this war there was as direct a contest between the principles of evil and good as the elder Persians or the Manicheans imagined in their fables. "Since the stirring day of the French Revolution," he writes to John May, "I have never felt half so much excitement in political events as the present state of Spain has given me." Little as he liked to leave home, if the Spaniards would bury their crown and sceptre, he would gird up his loins and assist at the ceremony devout as ever pilgrim at Compostella. A federal republic which should unite the peninsula and allow the internal governments to remain distinct was what Southey ardently desired. When news came of the Convention of Cintra (1808), the poet, ordinarily so punctual a sleeper, lay awake all night; since the execution of the Brissotines no public event distressed him so deeply. "How gravely and earnestly used Samuel Taylor Coleridge"—so writes Coleridge's daughter—"and William Wordsworth and my uncle Southey also to discuss the affairs of the nation, as if it all came home to their business and bosoms, as if it were their private concern! Men do not canvass these matters now-a-days, I think, quite in the same tone."

That faith in the ultimate triumph of good which sustains Southey's heroine against the persecution of the

Almighty Rajah, sustained Southey himself during the long struggle with Napoleon. A military despotism youthful and full of vigour, he said, must beat down corrupt establishments and worn-out governments, but how can it beat down for ever a true love of liberty and a true spirit of patriotism? When at last tidings reached Keswick that the Allies were in Paris, Southey's feelings were such as he had never experienced before. "The curtain had fallen after a tragedy of five-and-twenty years." The hopes and the ardours and the errors and the struggles of his early life crowded upon his mind; all things seemed to have worked together for good. He rejoiced that the whirlwind of revolution had cleared away the pestilence of the old governments; he rejoiced that right had conquered might. He did not wish to see the bad Bourbon race restored, except to complete Bonaparte's overthrow. And he feared lest an evil peace should be made. Paris taken, a commanding intellect might have cast Europe into whatever mould it pleased. "The first business," says Southey, with remarkable prevision, "should have been to have reduced France to what she was before Louis XIV.'s time; the second to have created a great power in the north of Germany with Prussia at its head; the third to have consolidated Italy into one kingdom or commonwealth."

The politicians of the *Edinburgh Review* had predicted ruin for all who dared to oppose the Corsican; they ridiculed the romantic hopes of the English nation; the fate of Spain, they declared in 1810, was decided; it would be cruel, they said, to foment petty insurrections; France had conquered Europe. It was this policy of despair which roused Scott and Southey. "We shall hoist the bloody flag," writes the latter, "down alongside

that Scotch ship, and engage her yard-arm to yard-arm." But at first Southey, by his own request, was put upon other work than that of firing off the heavy Quarterly guns. Probably no man in England had read so many books of travel; these he could review better, he believed, than anything else; biography and history were also within his reach; with English poetry from Spenser onwards his acquaintance was wide and minute, but he took no pleasure in sitting in judgment on his contemporaries; his knowledge of the literary history of Spain and Portugal was a speciality, which, as often as the readers of the Review could bear with it, might be brought into use. Two things he could promise without fail—perfect sincerity in what he might write, without the slightest pretension of knowledge which he did not possess, and a punctuality not to be exceeded by Mr. Murray's opposite neighbour, the clock of St. Dunstan's.

Southey's essays, literary, biographical, historical, and miscellaneous, would probably now exist in a collected form, and constitute a storehouse of information,—information often obtained with difficulty, and always conveyed in a lucid and happy style,—were it not that he chose on the eve of the Reform Bill to earn whatever unpopularity he could by collecting his essays on political and social subjects. Affairs had hurried forward with eager strides; these *Quarterly* articles seemed already far behind, and might safely be left to take a quiet corner in Time's wallet among the alms for oblivion. Yet Southey's political articles had been effective in their day, and have still a value by no means wholly antiquarian. His home politics had been in the main determined by his convictions on the great European questions. There was a party of revolution in this country eager to break with

the past, ready to venture every experiment for a future of mere surmise. Southey believed that the moral sense of the English people, their regard for conduct, would do much to preserve them from lawless excess; still, the lesson read by recent history was that order once overthrown, anarchy follows, to be itself quelled by the lordship of the sword. Rights, however, were pleaded —shall we refuse to any man the rights of a man? "Therapeutics," says Southey, "were in a miserable state as long as practitioners proceeded upon the gratuitous theory of elementary complexions; . . . . natural philosophy was no better, being a mere farrago of romance, founded upon idle tales or fanciful conjectures, not upon observation and experiment. The science of politics is just now in the same stage; it has been erected by shallow sophists upon abstract rights and imaginary compacts, without the slightest reference to habits and history." "Order and improvement" were the words inscribed on Southey's banner. Order, that England might not fall, as France had fallen, into the hands of a military saviour of society; order, that she might be in a condition to wage her great feud on behalf of freedom with undivided energy. Order, therefore, first; not by repression alone—though there were a time and a place for repression also—but order with improvement as a portion of its very life and being. Southey was a poet and a moralist, and judged of the well-being of a people by other than material standards; the wealth of nations seemed to him something other and higher than can be ascertained by wages and prices, rent and revenue, exports and imports. "True it is," he writes, "the ground is more highly cultivated, the crooked hedgerows have been thrown down, the fields are in better shape and of handsomer

dimensions, the plough makes longer furrows, there is more corn and fewer weeds; but look at the noblest produce of the earth, look at the children of the soil, look at the seeds which are sown here for immortality!" "The system which produces the happiest moral effects will be found the most beneficial to the interest of the individual and the general weal; upon this basis the science of political economy will rest at last, when the ponderous volumes with which it has been overlaid shall have sunk by their own weight into the dead sea of oblivion." Looking about him he asked, What do the English people chiefly need? More wealth? It may be so; but rather wisdom to use the wealth they have. More votes? Yes, hereafter; but first the light of knowledge, that men may see how to use a vote. Even the visible beauty and grace of life seemed to Southey a precious thing, the loss of which might be set over against some gain in pounds, shillings, and pence. The bleak walls and barrack-like windows of a manufactory, the long unlovely row of operatives' dwellings, struck a chill into his heart. He contrasts the old cottages substantially built of native stone, mellowed by time, taken by nature to herself with a mother's fondness, the rose-bushes beside the door, the little patch of flower-garden—he contrasts these with the bald deformities in which the hands of a great mill are stalled.

Before all else national education appeared to Southey to be the need of England. He saw a great population growing up with eager appetites, and consciousness of augmented power. Whence were moral thoughtfulness and self-restraint to come? Not surely from the triumph of liberal opinions; not from the power to read every incentive to vice and sedition; nor from Religious Tract

Societies; nor from the portentous bibliolatry of the Evangelical party. But there is an education which at once enlightens the understanding and trains the conscience and the will. And there is that great association for making men good, the Church of England. Connect the two,—education and the Church; the progress of enlightenment, virtue, and piety however gradual will be sure. Subordinate to this primary measure of reform, national education, many other measures were advocated by Southey. He looked forward to a time when, the great struggle respecting property over—for this struggle he saw looming not far off—public opinion will no more tolerate the extreme of poverty in a large class of the people than it now tolerates slavery in Europe; when the aggregation of land in the hands of great owners must cease, when that community of lands, which Owen of Lanark would too soon anticipate, might actually be realized. But these things were perhaps far off. Meanwhile how to bring nearer the golden age? Southey's son has made out a long list of the measures urged upon the English people in the *Quarterly Review*, or elsewhere, by his father. Bearing in mind that the proposer of these measures resisted the Reform Bill, Free Trade, and Catholic Emancipation, any one curious in such things may determine with what political label he should be designated:—National education; the diffusion of cheap and good literature; a well-organized system of colonization, and especially of female emigration;[2] a wholesome training

[2] "With the Cape and New Holland I would proceed thus:—'Govern yourselves, and we will protect you as long as you need protection; when that is no longer necessary, remember that though we be different countries, each independent, we are one people.'"—R. S. to W. S. Landor. Letters, vol ii. p. 263.

for the children of misery and vice in great cities; the establishment of Protestant sisters of charity and a better order of hospital nurses; the establishment of savings' banks in all small towns; the abolition of flogging in the army and navy, except in extreme cases; improvements in the poor laws; alterations in the game laws; alterations in the criminal laws, as inflicting the punishment of death in far too many cases; execution of criminals within prison walls; alterations in the factory system for the benefit of the operative, and especially as to the employment of children; national works—reproductive if possible—to be undertaken in times of peculiar distress; the necessity of doing away with interments in crowded cities; the system of giving allotments of ground to labourers; the employment of paupers in cultivating waste lands; the commutation of tithes; and last, the need for more clergymen, more colleges, more courts of law.

"Mr. Southey," said Hazlitt, "missed his way in Utopia; he has found it at old Sarum." He found it in England, in the State, and in the Church, with its ordered freedom, its serious aspiration, its habitual pieties, its reasonable service, its reverent history, its beauty of holiness, its close where priests, who are husbands and fathers, live out their calm benignant lives, its amiable home for those whose toil is ended and who now sleep well. But how Southey found his way from his early deism to Anglican orthodoxy cannot be precisely determined. Certainly not for many years could he have made that subscription to the Articles of the Church of England, which at the first barred his way to taking orders. The superstition, which seemed to be the chief spiritual food of Spain, had left Southey for the rest of his life a resolute opponent of Catholicism; and as he read lives of the Saints

and histories of the Orders, the exclamation "I do well to be angry" was often on his lips. For the wisdom, learning, and devotion of the Jesuits he had, however, a just respect. Geneva, with its grim logic and stark spirituality, suited nerves of a different temper from his. For a time Southey thought himself half a Quaker, but he desired more visible beauty, and more historical charm than he could find in Quakerism. Needing a comely home for his spiritual affections, he found precisely what pleased him built in the pleasant Anglican close. With growing loyalty to the State, his loyalty to the Church could not but keep pace. He loved her tolerance, her culture; he fed upon her judicious and learned writers;—Taylor, with his bright fancies like the little rings of the vine; South, hitting out straight from the shoulder at anarchy, fanaticism, and licentiousness, as Southey himself would have liked to hit; Jackson, whose weight of character made his pages precious as with golden bullion. After all, old England had some advantages over Utopia.

The English Constitution consisting of Church and State, it seemed to Southey an absurdity in politics to give those persons power in the State whose duty it is to subvert the Church. Admit Catholics, he said, to every office of trust, emolument, or honour; only never admit them into Parliament. "The arguments about equal rights are fit only for a schoolboy's declamation; it may as well be said that the Jew has a right to be a bishop, or the Quaker an admiral, as that the Roman Catholic has a right to a seat in the British Legislature; his opinions disqualify him." To call this a question of toleration was impudence; Catholics were free to practise the rites of their religion; they had the full and free use of the press; perfect tolera-

tion was granted to the members of that church, which, wherever dominant, tolerates no other. Catholic Emancipation would not conciliate Ireland; the great source of Irish misery had been not England's power, but her weakness, and those violences to which weakness resorts in self-defence; old sores were not to be healed by the admission of Catholic demagogues into Parliament. The measure styled Emancipation would assuredly be followed by the downfall of the Protestant Establishment in Ireland, and by the spread of Catholicism in English society. To Pyrrhonists one form of faith might seem as good or as bad as the other; but the great mass of the English people had not advanced so far in the march of intellect as to perceive no important difference between Catholic and Protestant doctrine, or between Catholic and Protestant morality. By every possible means better the condition of the Irish peasantry; give them employment in public works; facilitate, for those who desire it, the means of emigration; extend the poor-laws to Ireland, and lay that impost on absentees in such a proportion as may compensate in some degree for their non-residence; educate the people; execute justice and maintain peace, and the cry of Catholic Emancipation may be safely disregarded.

So Southey pleaded in the *Quarterly Review*. With reference to Emancipation and to the Reform Bill he and Wordsworth, who perhaps had not kept themselves sufficiently in relation with living men and the public sentiment of the day, were in their solitude gifted with a measure of the prophetic spirit, which in some degree explains their alarms. For the prophet who knows little of expediency and nothing of the manipulation of parties, nothing of the tangled skein of contending interests, sees the future in its moral causes, and he sees it in a

vision. But he cannot date the appearances in his vision. Battle, and garments rolled in blood, and trouble, and dimness of anguish pass before him, and he proclaims what it is given him to see. It matters not a little, however, in the actual event, whether the battle be on the morrow or half a century hence; and the prophet furnishes us with no chronology, or at best with some vague time and times and half a time. New forces have arisen before the terrors of his prediction come to pass, and therefore when they come to pass their effect is often altogether different from that anticipated. Wordsworth and Southey were right in declaring that a vast and formidable change was taking place in the England of their day; many things which they, amid incredulous scoffs, announced have become actual; others remain to be fulfilled. But the events have taken up their place in an order of things foreign to the conceptions of the prophets; the fire from heaven descends, but meanwhile we, ingenious sons of men, have set up a lightning-conductor.

Southey and the *Quarterly Review* were often spoken of as a single entity. But the Review in truth never precisely represented his feelings and convictions. With Gifford he had no literary sympathies. Gifford's heart was full of kindness, says Southey, for all living creatures except authors; *them* he regarded as Isaac Walton did the worm. Against the indulgence of that temper Southey always protested; yet he was chosen to bear the reproach of having tortured Keats, and of having anonymously glorified himself at the expense of Shelley. Gifford's omissions, additions, substitutions, often caused Southey's article in the Review to be very unlike the article which he had despatched to the editor in manuscript. Probably these changes were often made on

warrantable grounds. Southey's confidence in his own opinions, which always seemed to him to be based upon moral principles, was high; and he was not in the habit of diluting his ink. Phrases which sounded well in the library of Greta Hall had quite another sound in Mr. Murray's office in Fleet Street.

On arriving in London for a short visit in the autumn of 1813, Southey learnt that the Prince Regent wished to confer on him the Laureateship vacant by the death of Pye. Without consulting the Regent, Lord Liverpool had previously directed that the office should be offered to Walter Scott. On the moment came a letter from Scott informing Southey that he had declined the appointment, not from any foolish prejudice against holding it, but because he was already provided for, and would not engross emoluments which ought to be awarded to a man of letters who had no other views in life. Southey hesitated, having ceased for several years to produce occasional verses; but his friend Croker assured him that he would not be compelled to write odes as boys write exercises at stated times on stated subjects, that it would suffice if he wrote on great public events, or did not write, as the spirit moved him, and thus his scruples were overcome. In a little, low, dark room in the purlieus of St. James',—a solitary clerk being witness—the oath was duly administered by a fat old gentleman-usher in full buckle, Robert Southey swearing to be a faithful servant to the King, to reveal all treasons which might come to his knowledge, and to obey the Lord Chamberlain in all matters of the King's service. It was Scott's belief that his generosity had provided for his poorer brother bard an income of three or four hundred pounds a year. In reality the emolument was smaller and the task-

work more irksome than had been supposed. The tierce of Canary swilled by Ben Jonson and his poetic sons, had been wickedly commuted for a small sum; the whole net-income amounted to 90*l.* But this, "the very least of Providence's mercies," as a poor clergyman said when pronouncing grace over a herring, secured an important happiness for Southey; he did not employ it, as Byron puts it, to butter his bread on both sides; he added twelve pounds to it and vested it forthwith in an insurance upon his own life. "I have never felt any painful anxiety about providing for my family . . ." he writes to Scott, "but it is with the deepest feeling of thanksgiving that I have secured this legacy for my wife and children, and it is to you that I am primarily and chiefly indebted."

Croker's assurance was too hastily given. The birthday Ode indeed fell into abeyance during the long malady of George III., but the New Year's Ode had still to be provided. Southey was fortunate in 1814; events worthy of celebration had taken place; a dithyramb or rather an oration in lines of irregular length was accordingly produced; and was forwarded to his musical yoke-fellow Sir William Parsons. But the sight of Southey's page, over which the longs and shorts meandered seemingly at their own sweet will, shocked the orderly mind of the chief musician. What kind of ear could Mr. Southey have? His predecessor, the lamented Mr. Pye, had written his Odes always in regular stanzas. What kind of action was this exhibited by the unbroken State Pegasus? Duly as each New Year approached Southey set himself to what he called his *ode*ous job; it was the price he paid for the future comfort of his children. While his political assailants pictured the author of *Joan of Arc* as a court-lacquey following in the train of the fat Adonis, he with

grim cheerfulness was earning a provision for his girls, and had it not been a duty to kiss hands on the appointment, His Royal Highness the Prince Regent would never have seen his poet. Gradually the New Year's Ode ceased to be looked for, and Southey was emancipated. His verse-making as laureate occasionally rose into something higher than journeyman work; when public events stirred his heart to joy or grief, or indignation, he wrote many admirable periods of measured rhetoric. *The Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte* is of a higher strain; a knell, heavy yet clear-toned, is tolled by its finely wrought octosyllabics.

A few months after the battle of Waterloo, which had so deeply moved Southey, he started with his wife, a rare voyager from Keswick, and his little daughter Edith May, on a pilgrimage to the scene of victory. The aunts remained to take care of Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, with the nine-years-old darling of all, the only boy, Herbert. With Bruges, "like a city of Elizabeth's age—you expect to see a head with a ruff looking from the window," Southey was beyond measure delighted. At Ghent he ransacked bookshops, and was pleased to see in the Beguinage the realization of his own and Rickman's ideas on Sisterhoods. On a clear September day the travellers visited the battlefield; the autumnal sunshine with soft airs, and now and again a falling leaf, while the bees were busy among the year's last flowers, suited well with the poet's mood of thankfulness tempered by solemn thought. When early in December they returned with a lading of toys to their beloved lake-country, little Edith had hardly recovered from an illness which had attacked her at Aix. It was seven o'clock in the evening by the time they reached Rydal, and to press forward and arrive

while the children were asleep would be to defraud every-one of the first reward earned by so long absence. "A return home under fortunate circumstances has something of the character of a triumph and requires daylight." The glorious presence of Skiddaw, and Derwent bright under the winter sky, asked also for a greeting at noon rather than at night. A depth of grave and tender thankfulness lay below Southey's joy that morning; it was twelve years since he had pitched his tent here beside the Greta; twelve years had made him feel the touch of time; but what blessings they had brought: all his heart's desire was here—books, children, leisure, and a peace that passeth understanding. The instant hour, however, was not for meditation but for triumph:—

O joyful hour, when to our longing home
  The long-expected wheels at length drew nigh!
When the first sound went forth, "they come! they come!"
  And hope's impatience quicken'd every eye!
"Never had man whom Heaven would heap with bliss
More glad return, more happy hour than this."

Aloft on yonder bench, with arms dispread,
  My boy stood, shouting there his father's name,
Waving his hat around his happy head;
  And there a younger group his sisters came:
Smiling they stood with looks of pleased surprise
While tears of joy were seen in elder eyes.

Soon all and each came crowding round to share
  The cordial greeting, the beloved sight;
What welcomings of hand and lip were there!
  And when those overflowings of delight
Subsided to a sense of quiet bliss,
Life hath no purer, deeper happiness.

The young companion of our weary way
  Found here the end desired of all her ills;
She who in sickness pining many a day
  Hunger'd and thirsted for her native hills,

Forgetful now of suffering past and pain,
Rejoiced to see her own dear home again.

Recovered now the homesick mountaineer
  Sate by the playmate of her infancy,
The twin-like comrade,[3]—render'd doubly dear
  For that long absence; full of life was she
With voluble discourse and eager mien
Telling of all the wonders she had seen.

Here silently between her parents stood
  My dark-eyed Bertha, timid as a dove;
And gently oft from time to time she woo'd
  Pressure of hand, or word, or look of love,
With impulse shy of bashful tenderness,
Soliciting again the wished caress.

The younger twain in wonder lost were they,
  My gentle Kate and my sweet Isabel:
Long of our promised coming, day by day,
  It had been their delight to hear and tell;
And now when that long-promised hour was come,
Surprise and wakening memory held them dumb.

* * * * *

Soon they grew blithe as they were wont to be;
  Her old endearments each began to seek;
And Isabel drew near to climb my knee,
  And pat with fondling hand her father's cheek;
With voice and touch and look reviving thus
The feelings which had slept in long disuse.

But there stood one whose heart could entertain
  And comprehend the fulness of the joy;
The father, teacher, playmate, was again
  Come to his only and his studious boy;
And he beheld again that mother's eye
Which with such ceaseless care had watched his infancy.

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[3] Sara Coleridge.

Bring forth the treasures now,—a proud display,—
  For rich as Eastern merchants we return!
Behold the black Beguine, the Sister grey,
  The Friars whose heads with sober motion turn,
The Ark well-filled with all its numerous hives,
Noah and Shem and Ham and Japhet and their wives.

The tumbler loose of limb; the wrestlers twain;
  And many a toy beside of quaint device,
Which, when his fleecy flocks no more can gain
  Their pasture on the mountains hoar with ice,
The German shepherd carves with curious knife,
Earning in easy toil the food of frugal life.

It was a group which Richter had he viewed,
  Might have deemed worthy of his perfect skill;
The keen impatience of the younger brood,
  Their eager eyes and fingers never still;
The hope, the wonder, and the restless joy
Of those glad girls and that vociferous boy.

The aged friend[4] serene with quiet smile,
  Who in their pleasure finds her own delight;
The mother's heart-felt happiness the while;
  The aunts' rejoicing in the joyful sight;
And he who in his gaiety of heart,
With glib and noisy tongue performed the showman's part.

It was manifest to a thoughtful observer, says De Quincey, that Southey's golden equanimity was bound up in a trinity of chords, a three-fold chain—in a conscience clear of offence, in the recurring enjoyments from his honourable industry, and in the gratification of his parental affections. In the light of Herbert's smiles his father almost lived, the very pulses of his heart played in unison with the sound of his son's laughter. "There was," De Quincey goes on, "in his manner towards this child, and towards this only, something that marked an excess of

[4] Mrs. Wilson—then aged seventy-two.

delirious doating, perfectly unlike the ordinary chastened movement of Southey's affections; and something also which indicated a vague fear about him; a premature unhappiness as if already the inaudible tread of calamity could be divined, as if already he had lost him." As a baby, while Edith was only "like an old book ugly and good," Herbert, in spite of his Tartar eyes, a characteristic of Southey babyhood, was already beautiful. At six he was more gentle and more loving, says Southey, than you can almost conceive. "He has just learnt his Greek alphabet, and is so desirous of learning, so attentive and so quick of apprehension, that if it please God he should live, there is little doubt but that something will come out of him." In April, 1809, Southey writes to Landor twenty-four hours after an attack of croup which seized his boy had been subdued: "Even now I am far, very far from being at ease. There is a love which passeth the love of women, and which is more lightly alarmed than the lightest jealousy. Landor, I am not a Stoic at home; I feel as you do about the fall of an old tree! but, O Christ! what a pang it is to look upon the young shoot and think it will be cut down. And this is the thought which almost at all times haunts me; it comes upon me in moments when I know not whether the tears that start are of love or of bitterness."

The alarm of 1809 passed away, and Herbert grew to the age of nine, active and bright of spirit, yet too pale and, like his father, hanging too constantly over his books; a finely organized being, delicate in his sensibilities and prematurely accomplished. Before the snow had melted which shone on Skiddaw that day when the children welcomed home their parents, Herbert Southey lay in his grave. His disease was an affection of the heart, and for

weeks his father, palsied by apprehension, and unable to put hand to his regular work, stood by the bedside, with composed countenance, with words of hope, and agonized heart. Each day of trial made his boy more dear. With a trembling pride Southey saw the sufferer's behaviour, beautiful in this illness as in all his life; nothing could be more calm, more patient, more collected, more dutiful, more admirable. At last, worn with watching, Southey and his wife were prevailed upon to lie down. The good Mary Barker watched, and it is she who writes the following lines:—"Herbert!—that sweetest and most perfect of all children on this earth, who died in my arms at nine years of age, whose death I announced to his father and mother in their bed, where I had prayed and persuaded them to go. When Southey could speak, his first words were, '*The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!*' Never can I forget that moment" (1816).

"I am perfectly resigned," Southey wrote to Bedford on the most mournful of all days, "and do not give way to grief. Thank God I can control myself for the sake of others." But next morning found him weak as a child, even weaker in body than in mind, for long anxiety had worn him to the bone, and while he tried to calm and console the rest, his limbs trembled under him. His first wild wish to fly from Keswick passed away; it was good to be there near the boy's grave. Weak as he was, he flung himself upon his work. "I employ myself incessantly, taking, however, every day as much exercise as I can bear without injurious fatigue, which is not much." "It would surprise you were you to see what I get through in a day." "For the first week I did as much every day as would at other times have seemed

the full and overflowing produce of three." From his early discipline in the stoical philosophy some help now was gained; from his active and elastic mind the gain was more; but these would have been insufficient to support him without a heart-felt and ever-present faith that what he had lost was not lost for ever. A great change had indeed come upon him. He set his house in order, and made arrangements as if his own death were at hand. He resolved not to be unhappy, but the joyousness of his disposition had received its death-wound; he felt as if he had passed at once from boyhood to the decline of life. He tried dutifully to make head against his depression, but at times with poor success. "I employ myself, and have recovered strength, but in point of spirits I rather lose ground." Still there are hidden springs of comfort. "The head and flower of my earthly happiness is cut off. But I am *not* unhappy." "When I give way to tears, which is only in darkness or solitude, they are not tears of unmingled pain." All beloved ones grew more precious; the noble fortitude of his wife made her more than ever a portion of his best self. His uncle's boy, Edward, he could not love more than he had loved him before; but, "as far as possible, he will be to me hereafter," writes Southey, "in the place of my son." And in truth the blessing of Herbert's boyhood remained with him still; a most happy, a most beautiful boyhood it had been; he was thankful for having possessed the child so long; "for worlds I would not but have been his father." "I have abundant blessings left; for each and all of these I am truly thankful; but of all the blessings which God has given me, this child, who is removed, is the one I *still* prize the most." To relieve feelings which

he dared not utter with his lips, he thought of setting about a monument in verse for Herbert and himself, which might make one inseparable memory for father and son. A page or two of fragmentary thoughts in verse and prose for this poetic monument exists, but Southey could not keep his imagination enough above his heart to dare to go on with it; to do so would have dissolved his heart anew. One or two of these holy scriptures of woe, truly red drops of Southey's life-blood, will tell enough of this love passing the love of women.

Thy life was a day, and sum it well, life is but a week of such days,—with how much storm and cold and darkness! Thine was a sweet spring day--a vernal Sabbath, all sunshine, hope, and promise.

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and that name
In sacred silence buried, which was still
At morn and eve the never-wearying theme
Of dear discourse.

---

playful thoughts
Turned now to gall and esil.

No more great attempts, only a few autumnal flowers like second primroses, &c.

They who look for me in our Father's kingdom
Will look for him also; inseparably
Shall we be remembered.

Come then
Pain and Infirmity—appointed guests,
My heart is ready.

From the day of his son's death Southey began to step

down from the heights of life, with a steadfast foot, and head still held erect. He recovered cheerfulness, but it was as one who has undergone an amputation seeks the sunshine. Herbert's grave anchored him in Keswick. An offer of two thousand pounds a year for a daily article in the *Times* did not tempt him to London. His home, his books, his literary work, Skiddaw, Derwentwater, and Crosthwaite churchyard were too dear. Three years later came the unlooked-for birth of a second boy; and Cuthbert was loved by his father; but the love was chastened and controlled, of autumnal beauty and seriousness.

When the war with France had ended, depression of trade was acutely felt in England; party spirit ran high, and popular passions were dangerously roused. In the spring of 1817, the Laureate saw to his astonishment a poem entitled *Wat Tyler* by Robert Southey advertised as just published. He had written this lively dramatic sketch in the full fervour of Republicanism twenty-three years previously; the manuscript had passed into other hands, and he had long ceased to think of it. The skulking rogue and the knavish publisher who now gave it to the world had chosen their time judiciously; this rebuke to the apostate of the *Quarterly* would be a sweet morsel for gossip-mongers to roll under the tongue, an infallible pill to purge melancholy with all true children of progress. No fewer than sixty thousand copies, it is said, were sold. *Wat Tyler* suited well with Southey's nonage; it has a bright rhetorical fierceness of humanity. The speech-making radical blacksmith, "still toiling yet still poor," his insulted daughter, her virtuous lover, the communist priest John Ball, whose amiable theology might be that of Mr. Belsham in his later days, stand over against the

tyrant king, his Archiepiscopal absolver from oaths, the haughty nobles, and the servile minions of the law. There was nothing in the poem that could be remembered with shame, unless it is shameful to be generous and inexperienced at the age of twenty. But England in 1817 seemed charged with combustibles, and even so small a spark as this was not to be blown about without a care. The Prince Regent had been fired at; there were committals for treason; there were riots in Somersetshire; the swarm of Manchester Blanketeers announced a march to London; the Habeas Corpus was suspended; before the year was out, Brandreth and his fellows had been executed at Derby. Southey applied to the Court of Chancery for an injunction to restrain the publication of his poem. It was refused by Lord Eldon on the ground that the publication being one calculated to do injury to society, the author could not reclaim his property in it. There the matter might have dropped; but it seemed good to Mr. William Smith representing liberal Norwich, where Southey had many friends, to take his seat in the House of Commons one evening with the *Quarterly Review* in one pocket and *Wat Tyler* in the other, and to read aloud contrasted extracts showing how the malignant renegade could play the parts, as it suited him, of a seditious firebrand and a servile courtier. Wynn on the spot administered a well-deserved rebuke; Wilberforce wrote to Southey that had he been present, his voice would also have been heard; Coleridge vindicated him in the *Courier*. Seldom indeed was Southey drawn into controversy. When pelted with abuse he walked on with uplifted head, and did not turn round; it seemed to him that he was of a stature to invite bespattering. His self-confidence was high and calm; that he possessed no com-

mon abilities was certain: and the amount of toil which went into his books gave him a continual assurance of their worth which nothing could gainsay; he had no time for moods of dejection and self-distrust. But if Southey struck he struck with force, and tried to leave his mark on his antagonist. To repel this attack made in the House of Commons was a duty. *A Letter to William Smith, Esq., M.P.*, was written, as Wordsworth wished, with the strength of masculine indignation; blow after blow is planted with sure effect; no word is wasted; there is skill in the hard hitting; and the antagonist fairly overthrown, Southey, with one glance of scorn, turns on his heel, and moves lightly away. "I wish you joy," wrote Walter Scott, "of your triumphant answer. . . . . Enough of this gentleman, who I think will not walk out of the round again to slander the conduct of individuals." The concluding sentences of the Letter give in brief Southey's fearless review of his unstained career.

How far the writings of Mr. Southey may be found to deserve a favourable acceptance from after ages, time will decide; but a name which, whether worthily or not, has been conspicuous in the literary history of its age, will certainly not perish. . . . . It will be related that he lived in the bosom of his family, in absolute retirement; that in all his writings there breathed the same abhorrence of oppression and immorality, the same spirit of devotion, and the same ardent wishes for the melioration of mankind: and that the only charge which malice could bring against him was, that as he grew older, his opinions altered concerning the means by which that melioration was to be effected, and that as he learnt to understand the institutions of his country, he learnt to appreciate them rightly, to love, and to revere, and to defend them. It will be said of him, that in an age of personality he abstained from satire; and that during the course of his literary life, often as he was assailed, the only

occasion on which he ever condescended to reply, was, when a certain Mr. William Smith insulted him in Parliament with the appellation of renegade. On that occasion, it will be said, he vindicated himself, as it became him to do, and treated his calumniator with just and memorable severity. Whether it shall be added, that Mr. William Smith redeemed his own character by coming forward with honest manliness, and acknowledging that he had spoken rashly and unjustly, concerns himself, but is not of the slightest importance to me.

One other personal strife is worthy of notice. When visiting London in 1813, he made the acquaintance of Byron. "Is Southey magnanimous?" Byron asked Rogers, remembering how he had tried his wit in early days on *Thalaba* and *Madoc*. Rogers could answer for Southey's magnanimity, and the two poets met, Southey finding in Byron very much more to like than he had expected, and Byron being greatly struck by Southey's "epic appearance." "To have that poet's head and shoulders," he said, "I would almost have written his Sapphics." And in his diary he wrote: "Southey's talents are of the first order. His prose is perfect. . . . He has probably written too much of poetry for the present generation; posterity will probably select; but he has passages equal to anything." At a later date Byron thought Southey's *Roderick* "the first poem of the time." But when about to publish *Don Juan*, a work "too free for these very modest days," what better mode of saucily meeting public opinion, and getting a first laugh on his side, than to dedicate such a poem to a virtuous Laureate, and show that he and his fellows who had uttered nothing base, were yet political turncoats, not entitled by any superfine morality to assume airs of indignation against him and his reprobate hero? The dedication was shown about and laughed over, though not yet printed. Southey heard of these

things and felt released from that restraint of good feeling which made him deal tenderly in his writings with every one to whom he had once given his hand. An attack upon himself would not alone have roused Southey; no man received abuse with more self-possession. Political antagonism would still have left him able to meet a fellow-poet on the common ground of literature. When distress fastened upon Leigh Hunt, whose *Examiner* and *Liberal* had never spared the Laureate, Mr. Forster did not hesitate to apply to Southey for assistance, which was declined solely because the circular put forward Leigh Hunt's political services as those chiefly entitling him to relief. "Those who are acquainted with me," Southey wrote, "know that I am neither resentful nor intolerant," and after expressing admiration of Leigh Hunt's powers, the letter goes on to suggest that his friends should draw up a circular in which, without compromising any of his opinions, the appeal might be made solely upon the score of literary merit, "placing him thus, as it were, within the sacred territory which ought always to be considered and respected as neutral ground." Wise and admirable words! But there was one offence which was to Southey the unforgiveable sin against the holy spirit of a nation's literature. To entice poetry from the altar, and to degrade her for the pleasure of wanton imaginations seemed to Southey, feeling as he did the sanctity of the love of husband and wife, of father and child, to be treason against humanity. Southey was indeed tolerant of a certain Rabelaisian freedom in playing with some of the enclosed incidents of our life. "All the greatest of poets," he says, "have had a spice of Pantagruelism in their composition, which I verily believe was essential to their greatness." But to take an extravagant fling in costume of a *sans-culotte*, and

to play the part of "pander-general to the youth of Great Britain," were different things. In his preface to *A Vision of Judgment*, Southey deplored the recent fall in the ethical spirit of English literature, "which for half a century had been distinguished for its moral purity," and much of the guilt he laid on the leaders of "the Satanic School." In the long run the interests of art, as of all high endeavour, are invariably proved to be one with the interest of a nation's morality. It had taken many lives of men to lift literature out of the beast. From prudential virtue and the lighter ethics of Addison it had risen to the grave moral dignity of Johnson, and from that to the impassioned spirituality of Wordsworth. Should all this be abandoned, and should literature now be permitted to reel back into the brute? We know that the title "Satanic School" struck home, that Byron was moved, and replied with brilliant play of wit in his *Vision of Judgment*. The laughers went over to Byron's side. One who would be witty has certain advantages, if content to disregard honesty and good manners. To be witty was not Southey's concern. "I saw," he said many years after, "that Byron was a man of quick impulses, strong passions, and great powers. I saw him abuse these powers; and, looking at the effect of his writings on the public mind, it was my duty to denounce such of them as aimed at the injury of morals and religion. This was all." If continental critics find in what he set down a characteristic example of the bourgeois morality of England, we note with interest their point of view.[5]

"Bertha, Kate, and Isabel," wrote Southey on June 26, 1820, "you have been very good girls, and have written

[5] To certain false allegations of fact made by Byron, Southey replied in *The Courier*, and reprinted his letters in *Essays, Moral and Political*, vol. ii. pp. 183—205.

me very nice letters, with which I was much pleased. This is the last letter which I can write in return; and as I happen to have a quiet hour to myself here at Streatham, on Monday noon, I will employ that hour in relating to you the whole history and manner of my being ell-ell-deed at Oxford, by the Vice-Chancellor." Public distinctions of this kind he rated perhaps below their true value. To stand well with Murray and Longman was more to him than any handle to his name. A similar honour from Cambridge he declined. His gold medal from the Royal Society of Literature he changed for a silver coffee-pot for Mrs. Southey. To "be be-doctored and called everything that ends in issimus," was neither any harm nor much good; but to take his seat between such doctors as the Duke of Wellington, and—perhaps—Sir Walter Scott was a temptation. When his old school-fellow Phillimore presented Southey, the theatre rang with applause. Yet the day was indeed one of the heaviest in his life. Never had he stopped for a night in Oxford since he left it in 1794, intending to bid farewell to Europe for an Utopia in some back settlement of America. Not one who really loved him—for Scott could not appear—was present. When in the morning he went to look at Balliol, no one remembered him except old Adams, who had attempted to dress his hair as a freshman, and old Mrs. Adams, the laundress, both now infirm. From the tumultuous theatre Southey strolled into Christ Church walks alone. What changes time had made! Many of the friends with whom he had sauntered there were in their graves. So brooding he chewed the bitter-sweet of remembrance, until at length a serious gratitude prevailed. "Little girls," the letter ends, "you know it might be proper for me now to wear a large wig, and to be called

Doctor Southey, and to become very severe, and leave off being a comical papa. And if you should find that ell-ell-deeing has made this difference in me, you will not be surprised. However, I shall not come down in my wig, neither shall I wear my robes at home."

While in Holland in the summer of 1826, a more conspicuous honour was unexpectedly thrust upon Southey. The previous year he had gone abroad with Henry Taylor, and at Douay was bitten on the foot by Satan, according to his conjecture, sitting squat at his great toe; at Leyden he was obliged to rest his inflamed foot, and there it was his good fortune to be received into the house of the poet Bilderdijk, a delightful old erudite and enthusiast, whose charming wife was the translator of *Roderick*. In 1826 he visited his kind friends once more, and at Brussels received the surprising intelligence that during his absence he had been elected a member of Parliament. Lord Radnor, an entire stranger, had read with admiration Southey's confession of faith concerning Church and State, in the last paragraph of his *Book of the Church*. By his influence the poet had been elected for the borough of Downton; the return, however, was null, for Southey held a pension during pleasure, and, even if this were resigned, where was the property qualification? This latter objection was met by Sir Robert Inglis, who desired to know whether Southey would sit in Parliament if an estate of 300*l.* a year were purchased for him. An estate of 300*l.* a year would be a very agreeable thing to Robert Lackland; but he had no mind to enter on a new public sphere for which he was ill qualified by his previous life, to risk the loss of health by midnight debates, to abandon the education of his little boy, and to separate himself more or less from his wife and daughters. He

could not be wrong, he believed, in the quiet confidence which assured him that he was in his proper place.

Now more than ever before Edith Southey needed her husband's sustaining love. On the day of his return to Keswick, while amused to find himself the object of mob popularity, he learnt that one of his daughters was ailing; the illness, however, already seemed to have passed the worst. This appearance of amendment quickly proved deceptive; and on a Sunday evening in mid July, Isabel, "the most radiant creature that I ever beheld or shall behold," passed away, while her father was on his knees in the room below, praying that she might be released from suffering either by recovery or by death. All that had been gone through ten years before, renewed itself with dread exactness. Now as then the first day was one of stunned insensibility; now as then the next morning found him weak as a child, and striving in his weakness to comfort those who needed his support; now as then he turned to Grosvenor Bedford for a heart on which he might lay his own heart prone, letting his sorrow have its way. "Nothing that has assailed my character, or affected my worldly fortune, ever gave me an hour's vexation, or deprived me of an hour's rest. My happiness has been in my family, and there only was I vulnerable; that family is now divided between earth and heaven, and I must pray to remain with those who are left, so long as I can contribute to their welfare and comfort, rather than be gathered (as otherwise I would fain be) to those who are gone." On that day of which the word Τετέλεσται is the record, the day on which the body of his bright Isabel was committed to earth, Southey wrote a letter to his three living daughters, copied with his own hand for each. It said what he could not bear to say of consolation and

admonishment by word of mouth; it prepared them for the inevitable partings to come; it urged on them with tender solicitude the duty of self-watchfulness, of guarding against little faults, of bearing and forbearing; it told them of his own grief to think that he should ever by a harsh or hasty word have given their dead sister even a momentary sorrow which might have been spared; it ended with the blessing of their afflicted father.

Sorrows of this kind, as Southey has truly said, come the heavier when they are repeated; under such strokes a courageous heart may turn coward. On Mrs. Southey a weight as of years had been laid; her spirits sank, her firmness gave way, a breath of danger shook her. Southey's way of bearing himself towards the dead is that saddest way—their names were never uttered; each one of the household had, as it were, a separate chamber in which the images of their dead ones lay, and each went in alone and veiled. The truth is, Southey had little native hardihood of temperament; self-control with him was painfully acquired. In solitude and darkness his tears flowed; when in his slumbers the images of the dead came to him, he could not choose but weep. Therefore all the more among those whom he wished to lead into the cheerful ways of life, he had need to keep a guard upon his tenderness. He feared to preserve relics, and did not like to bear in mind birthdays, lest they should afterwards become too dangerously charged with remembrance and grief. "Look," he writes, "at some verses in the Literary Souvenir, p. 113; they are written by a dear friend of mine on the death of —you will know who"—for his pen would have trembled in tracing the name Isabel. And yet his habitual feelings with respect to those who had departed were not bitter; the dead were absent—that was all; he thought

of them and of living friends at a distance with the same complacency, the same affection, only with more tenderness of the dead.

Greta Hall, once resounding with cheerful voices, had been growing silent. Herbert was gone, Isabel was gone. In 1829 Sara Coleridge went a bride tearful, yet glad, her mother accompanying her, to distant London. Five years later Edith May Southey became the wife of the Rev. John Warter. Her father fell back even more than in former years, upon the never-failing friends of his library. It was in these darkening years that he sought relief in carrying out the idea, conceived long before, of a story which should be no story, but a spacious receptacle for mingled wit and wisdom, experience and book-lore, wholesome nonsense and solemn meditation. *The Doctor* begun in jest after merry talks with Grosvenor Bedford, grew more and more earnest as Southey proceeded. "He dreamt over it and brooded over it, laid it aside for months and years, resumed it after long intervals, and more often latterly in thoughtfulness than in mirth, and fancied at last that he could put into it more of his mind than could conveniently be produced in any other form." The secret of its authorship was carefully kept. Southey amused himself somewhat laboriously with ascribing it now to this hand and now to that. When the first two volumes arrived, as if from the anonymous author, Southey thrust them away with well assumed impatience, and the disdainful words, "Some novel I suppose." Yet several of his friends had shrewd suspicions that the manuscript lay somewhere hidden in Greta Hall, and on receiving their copies wrote to thank the veritable donor; these thanks were forwarded by Southey, not without a smile in which something of irony mingled, to Theodore Hook,

who was not pleased to enter into the jest. "I see in *The Doctor*," says its author, playing the part of an impartial critic, "a little of Rabelais, but not much; more of Tristram Shandy, somewhat of Burton, and perhaps more of Montaigne; but methinks the *quintum quid* predominates?" The *quintum quid* is that wisdom of the heart, that temper of loyal and cheerful acquiescence in the rule of life as appointed by a Divine Master, which characterizes Southey.

For the third volume of *The Doctor* in that chapter which tells of Leonard Bacon's sorrow for his Margaret, Southey wrote as follows:

> Leonard had looked for consolation, where, when sincerely sought, it is always to be found; and he had experienced that religion effects in a true believer all that philosophy professes, and more than all that mere philosophy can perform. The wounds which stoicism would cauterize, religion heals.
>
> There is a resignation with which, it may be feared, most of us deceive ourselves. To bear what must be borne, and submit to what cannot be resisted, is no more than what the unregenerate heart is taught by the instinct of animal nature. But to acquiesce in the afflictive dispensations of Providence—to make one's own will conform in all things to that of our Heavenly Father, to say to him in the sincerity of faith, when we drink of the bitter cup, "Thy will be done!"—to bless the name of the Lord as much from the heart when he takes away, as when he gives, and with a depth of feeling, of which, perhaps, none but the afflicted heart is capable,—this is the resignation which religion teaches, this is the sacrifice which it requires.

These words written with no forefeeling, were the last put on paper before the great calamity burst upon Southey. "I have been parted from my wife," he tells Grosvenor Bedford on October 2, 1834, "by something worse than death. Forty years she has been the life of my life; and I have left her this day in a lunatic asylum."

Southey's union with his wife had been at the first one of love, and use and wont had made her a portion of his very being. Their provinces in the household had soon defined themselves. He in the library earned their means of support; all else might be left to her with absolute confidence in her wise contrivance and quiet energy. Beneath the divided work in their respective provinces their lives ran on in deep and still accord. Now he felt for the first time shrunk into the limits of a solitary will. All that had grown out of the past was deranged by a central disturbance; no branch had been lopped away, but the main trunk was struck, and seared, and shaken to the roots. "Mine is a strong heart;" Southey writes, "I will not say that the last week has been the most trying of my life; but I will say, that the heart which could bear it can bear anything." Yet when he once more set himself to work, a common observer, says his son, would have noticed little change in him, though to his family the change was great indeed. His most wretched hour was when he woke at dawn from broken slumbers; but a word of hope was enough to counteract the mischief of a night's unrest. No means were neglected which might serve to keep him in mental and bodily health; he walked in all weathers; he pursued his task-work diligently, yet not over-diligently; he collected materials for work of his choice. When in the spring of 1835 it was found that the sufferer might return to wear out the body of this death in her own home, it was marvellous, declares Cuthbert Southey, how much of his old elasticity remained, and how though no longer happy, he could be contented and cheerful, and take pleasure in the pleasures of others. He still could contribute something to his wife's comfort. Through the

weary dream which was now her life she knew him, and took pleasure in his coming and going.

When Herbert died, Southey had to ask a friend to lend him money to tide over the short period of want which followed his weeks of enforced inaction. Happily now for the first time in his life his income was beforehand with his expenses. A bequest of some hundreds of pounds had come in; his *Naval Biographies* were paying him well, and during part of Mrs. Southey's illness he was earning a respectable sum, intended for his son's education, by his *Life of Cowper*, a work to which a painful interest was added by the study of mental alienation forced upon him in his own household. So the days passed not altogether cheerlessly, in work if possible more arduous than ever. "One morning," writes his son, "shortly after the letters had arrived, he called me into his study. 'You will be surprised,' he said, 'to hear that Sir Robert Peel has recommended me to the King for the distinction of a baronetcy, and will probably feel some disappointment when I tell you that I shall not accept it.'" Accompanying Sir Robert Peel's official communication came a private letter asking in the kindest manner how he could be of use to Southey. "Will you tell me," he said, "without reserve, whether the possession of power puts within my reach the means of doing anything which can be serviceable or acceptable to you; and whether you will allow me to find some compensation for the many sacrifices which office imposes upon me, in the opportunity of marking my gratitude as a public man, for the eminent services you have rendered, not only to literature, but to the higher interests of virtue and religion?" Southey's answer stated simply what his circumstances were, showing how unbecoming and unwise

it would be to accept the proffered honour; it told the friendly statesman of the provision made for his family—no inconsiderable one—in the event of his death; it went on to speak of his recent affliction; how this had sapped his former confidence in himself; how it had made him an old man and forced upon him the reflection that a sudden stroke might deprive him of those faculties, by which his family had hitherto been supported. "I could afford to die, but not to be disabled," he wrote in his first draft, but fearing that these words would look as if he wanted to trick out pathetically a plain statement, he removed them. Finally, if such an increase of his pension as would relieve him from anxiety on behalf of his family could form part of a plan for the encouragement of literature, it would satisfy all his desires. "Young as I then was," Cuthbert Southey writes, "I could not, without tears, hear him read with his deep and faltering voice, his wise refusal and touching expression of those feelings and fears he had never before given utterance to, to any of his own family." Two months later Sir Robert Peel signed a warrant adding 300*l.* annually to Southey's existing pension. He had resolved to recognize literary and scientific eminence as a national claim; the act was done upon public grounds, and Southey had the happiness of knowing that others beside himself would partake of the benefit.

"Our domestic prospects are darkening upon us daily," Southey wrote in July, 1835. "I know not whether the past or the present seems most like a dream to me, so great and strange is the difference. But, yet a little while, and all will again be at the best." While Mrs. Southey lived, a daily demand was made upon his sympathies and solicitude which it was his happiness to fulfil. But

from all except his wife he seemed already to be dropping away into a state of passive abstraction. Kate and Bertha silently ministered to his wants, laid the books he wanted in his way, replenished his ink-bottle, mended his pens, stirred the fire, and said nothing. A visit to the south-west of England in company with his son broke the long monotony of endurance. It was a happiness to meet Landor at Bristol, and Mrs. Bray at Tavistock, and Mrs. Bray's friend, the humble poet, Mary Colling, whose verses he had reviewed in the *Quarterly*. Yet to return to his sorrowful home was best of all; there is a leap up of the old spirits in a letter to his daughters announcing his approach. It is almost the last gleam of brightness. In the autumn of that year (1837) Edith Southey wasted away, growing weaker and weaker. The strong arm on which she had leaned for two and forty years supported her down stairs each day and bore her up again at evening. When the morning of November 16th broke, she passed quietly "from death unto life."

From that day Southey was an altered man. His spirits fell to a still lower range. For the first time he was conscious of the distance which years had set between him and his children. Yet his physical strength was unbroken; nothing but snow deterred him from his walk; he could still circle the lake, or penetrate into Borrowdale on foot. But Echo, whom he had summoned to rejoice, was not roused by any call of his. Within doors it was only by a certain violence to himself that he could speak. In the library he read aloud his proof sheets alone; but for this he might almost have forgotten the sound of his own voice. Still he was not wholly abandoned to grief; he looked back and saw that life had been good; its hardest moral dis-

cipline had served to train the heart: much still remained that was of worth; Cuthbert was quietly pursuing his Oxford studies; Bertha was about to be united in marriage to her cousin Herbert Hill, son of that good uncle who had done so much to shape Southey's career. "If not hopeful," he writes, "I am more than contented, and disposed to welcome and entertain any good that may yet be in store for me, without any danger of being disappointed if there should be none." Hope of a sober kind indeed had come to him. For twenty years he had known Caroline Bowles; they had long been in constant correspondence; their acquaintance had matured into friendship. She was now in her fifty-second year; he, in his sixty-fifth. It seemed to Southey natural that without making any breach with his past life, he should accept her companionship in the nearest way possible, should give to her all he could of what remained, and save himself from that forlorn feeling which he feared might render old age miserable and useless.

But already the past had subdued Southey, and if any future lay before him it was a cloud lifeless and grey. In the autumn of 1838 he started for a short tour on the Continent with his old friend Senhouse, his son Cuthbert, John Kenyon, their master of the horse, Captain Jones, the chamberlain, and Crabb Robinson, who was intendant and paid the bills. On the way from Boulogne they turned aside to visit Chinon, for Southey wished to stand on the spot where his first heroine, Joan of Arc, had recognized the French king. At Paris he roamed along the quays and hunted bookstalls. The change and excitement seemed to have served him; he talked freely and was cheerful. "Still," writes his son, "I could not fail to perceive a considerable

change in him from the time we had last travelled together —all his movements were slower, he was subject to frequent fits of absence, and there was an indecision in his manner and an unsteadiness in his step which was wholly unusual with him." He often lost his way, even in the hotels; then laughed at his own mistakes, and yet was painfully conscious of his failing memory. His journal breaks off abruptly when not more than two-thirds of the tour had been accomplished. In February, 1839, his brother, Dr. Southey—ever a true comrade—describes him as working slowly and with an abstraction not usual to him; sometimes to write even a letter seemed an effort. In midsummer his marriage to Caroline Bowles took place, and with her he returned to Keswick in August. On the way home his friends in London saw that he was much altered. "The animation and peculiar clearness of his mind," wrote Henry Taylor, "was quite gone, except a gleam or two now and then. . . . . The appearance was that of a placid languor, sometimes approaching to torpor, but not otherwise than cheerful. He is thin and shrunk in person, and that extraordinary face of his has no longer the fire and strength it used to have, though the singular cast of the features and the habitual expressions make it still a most remarkable phenomenon." Still his friends had not ceased to hope that tranquillity would restore mental tone, and he himself was planning the completion of great designs. "As soon as we are settled at Keswick, I shall resolutely begin upon the *History of Portugal*, as a duty which I owe to my uncle's memory. Half of the labour I consider as done. But I have long since found the advantage of doing more than one thing at a time, and the *History of the Monastic Orders* is the other thing to which I shall set to with hearty

good will. Both these are works of great pith and moment."

Alas, the current of these enterprises was already turned awry. In August it was not without an occasional uncertainty that he sustained conversation. "He lost himself for a moment; he was conscious of it, and an expression passed over his countenance which was very touching—an expression of pain and also of resignation. . . . . The charm of his manner is perhaps even enhanced at present (at least when one knows the circumstances) by the gentleness and patience which pervade it." Before long the character of his handwriting, which had been so exquisite, was changed to something like the laboured scrawl of a child; then he ceased to write. Still he could read, and, even when he could no longer take in the meaning of what was before him, his eye followed the lines of the printed page. At last even this was beyond his power. He would walk slowly round his library, pleased with the presence of his cherished possessions, taking some volume down mechanically from the shelf. In 1840 Wordsworth went over to Greta Hall. "Southey did not recognize me," he writes, "till he was told. Then his eyes flashed for a moment with their former brightness, but he sank into the state in which I had found him, patting with both hands his books affectionately like a child." In the *Life of Cowper* he had spoken of the distress of one who suffers from mental disease as being that of a dream, "a dream indeed from which the sufferer can neither wake nor be awakened; but it pierces no deeper, and there seems to be the same dim consciousness of its unreality." So was it now with himself. Until near the end he retained considerable bodily strength; his snow-white hair grew darker; it was the spirit which had

endured shattering strokes of fate, and which had spent itself in studying to be quiet.

After a short attack of fever, the end came on the 21st of March, 1843. Never was that "Well done," the guerdon of the good and faithful servant, pronounced amid a deeper consent of those who attended and had ears to hear. On a dark and stormy morning Southey's body was borne to the beautiful churchyard of Crosthwaite, towards which he had long looked affectionately as his place of rest. There lay his three children and she who was the life of his life. Skiddaw gloomed solemnly overhead. A grey-haired, venerable man who had crossed the hills stood there leaning on the arm of his son-in-law; these two, Wordsworth and Quillinan, were the only strangers present. As the words, "ashes to ashes," were uttered, a sudden gleam of sunshine touched the grave; the wind dropped, the rain was over, and the birds had begun their songs of spring. The mourners turned away thinking of a good man's life and death with peace—

And calm of mind, all passion spent.

CHAPTER VII.

SOUTHEY'S WORK IN LITERATURE.

SOUTHEY'S career of authorship falls into two chief periods —a period during which poetry occupied the higher place and prose the lower, and a period during which this order was reversed. His translations of romantic fiction—*Amadis of Gaul*, *Palmerin of England*, and *The Cid*—connect the work of the earlier with that of the latter period, and serve to mark the progress of his mind from legend to history and from the fantastic to the real. The poet in Southey died young, or, if he did not die, fell into a numbness and old age like that of which an earlier singer writes :—

> Elde that in my spirit dulleth me,
> Hath of endyting all the subtilité
> Welnyghe bereft out of my remembraunce.

After thirty Southey seldom cared to utter himself in occasional verse. The uniformity of his life, the equable cheerfulness maintained by habits of regular work, his calm religious faith, his amiable Stoicism left him without the material for lyrical poetry ; and one so honest and healthy had no care to feign experiences of the heart which were not his. Still he could apply himself to the treatment of large subjects with a calm continuous energy ; but as time went on his hand grew slack, and wrought

with less ease. Scarcely had he overcome the narrative poet's chief difficulty, that of subduing varied materials to an unity of design, when he put aside verse and found it more natural to be historian than poet.

The poetry of sober feeling is rare in lyrical verse. This may be found admirably rendered in some of Southey's shorter pieces. Although his temper was ardent and hopeful, his poems of pensive remembrance, of meditative calm, are perhaps the most characteristic. Among these his *Inscriptions* rank high. Some of those in memory of the dead are remarkable for their fine poise of feeling, all that is excessive and transitory having been subdued; for the tranquil depths of sorrow and of hope which lie beneath their clear, melodious words.

Southey's larger poetical works are fashioned of two materials, which do not always entirely harmonize. First, material brought from his own moral nature; his admiration of something elevated in the character of man or woman —generosity, gentleness, loyalty, fortitude, faith. And secondly, material gathered from abroad; mediæval pomps of religion and circumstance of war; Arabian marvels, the work of the enchanters and the genii; the wild beauties and adventure of life amid New-world tribes; the monstrous mythology of the Brahman. With such material the poet's inventive talent deals freely, rearranges details or adds to them; still Southey is here rather a *finder* than a *maker*. His diligence in collecting and his skill in arranging were so great that it was well if the central theme did not disappear among manifold accessories. One who knows Southey, however, can recognize his ethical spirit in every poem. Thalaba, as he himself confessed, is a male Joan of Arc. Destiny or Providence has marked alike the hero and the heroine from mankind; the sheep-

fold of Domremi, and the palm-grove by old Moath's tent, alike nurture virgin purity and lofty aspiration. Thalaba, like Joan, goes forth a delegated servant of the Highest to war against the powers of evil; Thalaba, like Joan, is sustained under the trials of the way by the sole talisman of faith. We are not left in doubt as to where Southey found his ideal. Mr. Barbauld thought Joan of Arc was modelled on the Socinian Christ. He was mistaken; Southey's ideal was native to his soul. "Early admiration, almost adoration of Leonidas, early principles of Stoicism derived from the habitual study of Epictetus, and the French Revolution at its height when I was just eighteen—by these my mind was moulded." And from these, absorbed into Southey's very being, came Thalaba and Joan.

The word *high-souled* takes possession of the mind as we think of Southey's heroic personages. Poetry, he held, ought rather to elevate than to affect—a Stoical doctrine transferred to art, which meant that his own poetry was derived more from admiration of great qualities, than from sympathy with individual men or women. Neither the quick and passionate tenderness of Burns, nor the stringent pathos of Wordsworth, can be found in Southey's verse. No eye probably ever shed a tear over the misery of Ladurlad and his persecuted daughter. She, like the lady in *Comus*, is set above our pity and perhaps our love. In *Kehama*, a work of Southey's mature years, the chivalric ardour of his earlier heroes is transformed into the sterner virtues of fortitude and an almost despairing constancy. The power of evil, as conceived by the poet, has grown more despotic; little can be achieved by the light-winged Glendoveer—a more radiant Thalaba—against the Rajah; only the lidless eye of Seeva can destroy that tyranny of

lust and pride. *Roderick* marks a higher stage in the development of Southey's ethical ideal. Roderick too is a delegated champion of right against force and fraud; he too endures mighty pains. But he is neither such a combatant, pure and intrepid, as goes forth from the Arab tent, nor such a blameless martyr as Ladurlad. He is first a sinner enduring just punishment; then a stricken penitent; and from his shame and remorse he is at last uplifted by enthusiasm on behalf of his God and his people into a warrior saint, the Gothic Maccabee.

Madoc stands somewhat away from the line of Southey's other narrative poems. Though, as Scott objected, the personages in *Madoc* are too nearly abstract types, Southey's ethical spirit dominates this poem less than any of the others. The narrative flows on more simply. The New-world portion tells a story full of picturesque incident, with the same skill and grace that belong to Southey's best prose writings. Landor highly esteemed *Madoc*. Scott declared that he had read it three times since his first cursory perusal, and each time with increased admiration of the poetry. Fox was in the habit of reading aloud after supper to eleven o'clock, when it was the rule at St. Ann's Hill to retire; but while *Madoc* was in his hand, he read until after midnight. Those, however, who opened the bulky quarto were few; the tale was out of relation with the time; it interpreted no need, no aspiration, no passion of the dawn of the present century. And the mind of the time was not enough disengaged to concern itself deeply with the supposed adventures of a Welsh prince of the twelfth century among the natives of America.

At heart, then, Southey's poems are in the main the outcome of his moral nature; this we recognize through all

disguises, Mohammedan, Hindoo, or Catholic. He planned and partly wrote a poem—*Oliver Newman*—which should associate his characteristic ideal with Puritan principles and ways of life. The foreign material through which his ethical idea was set forth went far, with each poem, to determine its reception by the public. Coleridge has spoken of "the pastoral charm and wild streaming lights of the *Thalaba*." Dewy night moon-mellowed, and the desert-circle girdled by the sky, the mystic palace of Shedad, the vernal brook, Oneiza's favourite kidling, the lamp-light shining rosy through the damsel's delicate fingers, the aged Arab in the tent-door,—these came with a fresh charm into English narrative poetry eighty years ago. The landscape and the manners of Spain, as pictured in *Roderick*, are of marked grandeur and simplicity. In *Kehama* Southey attempted a bolder experiment, and although the poem became popular, even a well-disposed reader may be allowed to sympathize with the dismay of Charles Lamb among the monstrous gods: "I never read books of travels, at least not farther than Paris or Rome. I can just endure Moors, because of their connexion as foes with Christians; but Abyssinians, Ethiops, Esquimaux, Dervises, and all that tribe I hate. I believe I fear them in some manner. A Mohammedan turban on the stage, though enveloping some well-known face, ... does not give me unalloyed pleasure. I am a Christian, Englishman, Londoner, Templar. God help me when I come to put off these snug relations, and to get abroad into the world to come."

Though his materials are often exotic, in style Southey aimed at the simplicity and strength of undefiled English. If to these melody was added, he had attained all he desired. To conversations with William Taylor about Ger-

man poetry—certainly not to Taylor's example—he ascribes his faith in the power of plain words to express in poetry the highest thoughts and strongest feelings. He perceived in his own day the rise of the ornate style, which has since been perfected by Tennyson, and he regarded it as a vice in art. In early years Akenside had been his instructor; afterwards he owed more to Landor than to any other master of style. From *Madoc* and *Roderick*—both in blank verse—fragments could be severed, which might pass for the work of Landor; but Southey's free and facile manner, fostered by early reading of Ariosto, and by constant study of Spenser, soon reasserts itself; from under the fragment of monumental marble, white almost as Landor's, a stream wells out smooth and clear, and lapses away never dangerously swift nor mysteriously deep. On the whole, judged by the highest standards, Southey's poetry takes a midmost rank; it neither renders into art a great body of thought and passion, nor does it give faultless expression to lyrical moments. But it is the out-put of a large and vigorous mind, amply stored with knowledge; its breath of life is the moral ardour of a nature strong and generous, and therefore it can never cease to be of worth.

Southey is at his best in prose. And here it must be borne in mind that, though so voluminous a writer, he did not achieve his most important work, the *History of Portugal*, for which he had gathered vast collections. It cannot be doubted that this, if completed, would have taken a place among our chief histories. The splendour of story and the heroic personages would have lifted Southey into his highest mood. We cannot speak with equal confidence of his projected work of second magnitude, the *History of the Monastic Orders*. Learned and sensible it could not

fail to be, and Southey would have recognized the more substantial services of the founders and the brotherhoods; but he would have dealt by methods too simple with the psychology of religious emotions; the words enthusiasm and fraud might have risen too often to his lips; and at the grotesque humours of the devout, which he would have exhibited with delight, he might have been too prone to smile.

As it is, Southey's largest works are not his most admirable. *The History of Brazil*, indeed, gives evidence of amazing patience, industry, and skill; but its subject necessarily excludes it from the first rank. At no time from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century was Brazil a leader or a banner-bearer among lands. The life of the people crept on from point to point, and that is all; there are few passages in which the chronicle can gather itself up, and transform itself into a historic drama. Southey has done all that was possible; his pages are rich in facts, and are more entertaining than perhaps any other writer could have made them. His extraordinary acquaintance with travel gave him many advantages in narrating the adventures of early explorers; and his studies in ecclesiastical history led him to treat with peculiar interest the history of the Jesuit Reductions.

The History of the Peninsular War suffers by comparison with the great work of Sir William Napier. That heroic man had himself been a portion of the strife; his senses singularly keen were attuned to battle; as he wrote, the wild bugle-calls, the measured tramp, the peals of musketry, the dismal clamour sounded in his ears; he abandoned himself again to the swiftness and "incredible fury" of the charge. And with his falcon eye he could discern amid the shock or formless dispersion, wherever

hidden, the fiery heart of victory. Southey wrought in his library as a man of letters; consulted sources, turned over manuscripts, corresponded with witnesses, set his material in order. The passion of justice and an enthusiasm on behalf of Spain give unity to his work. If he estimated too highly the disinterestedness and courage of the people of the Peninsula, the illusion was generous. And it may be that enduring spiritual forces become apparent to a distant observer, which are masked by accidents of the day and hour from one who is in their midst.

History as written by Southey is narrative rendered spiritual by moral ardour. There are no new political truths, he said. If there be laws of a nation's life other than those connected with elementary principles of morality, Southey did not discover these. What he has written may go only a little way towards attaining the ultimate ends of historical study, but so far as it goes it keeps the direct line. It is not led astray by will-o'-the-wisp, vague-shining theories that beguile night wanderers. Its method is an honest method as wholesome as sweet; and simple narrative if ripe and sound at first is none the less so at the end of a century.

In biography, at least, one may be well pleased with clear and charming narrative. Here Southey has not been surpassed, and even in this single province he is versatile; he has written the life of a warrior, of a poet, and of a saint. His industry was that of a German; his lucidity and perfect exposition were such as we rarely find outside a French memoir. There is no style fitter for continuous narrative than the pedestrian style of Southey. It does not beat upon the ear with hard metallic vibration. The sentences are not cast by the thousand in one mould of

cheap rhetoric, nor made brilliant with one cheap colour. Never dithyrambic, he is never dull; he affects neither the trick of stateliness nor that of careless ease; he does not seek out curiosities of refinement, nor caress delicate affectations. Because his style is natural it is inimitable, and the only way to write like Southey is to write well.

"The favourite of my library, among many favourites;" so Coleridge speaks of the *Life of Wesley*, "the book I can read for the twentieth time, when I can read nothing else at all." And yet the school-boy's favourite, the *Life of Nelson*, is of happier inspiration. The simple and chivalric hero, his splendid achievements, his pride in duty, his patriotism, roused in Southey all that was most strong and high; but his enthusiasm does not escape in lyrical speech. "The best eulogy of Nelson," he says, "is the faithful history of his actions; the best history that which shall relate them most perspicuously." Only when all is over, and the captain of Trafalgar lies dead, his passion and pride find utterance:—"If the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory." From Nelson on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*, to Cowper caressing his tame hares, the interval is wide; but Southey, the man of letters, lover of the fireside, and patron of cats, found it natural to sympathize with his brother poet. His sketches of literary history in the *Life of Cowper* are characteristic. The writer's range is wide, his judgment sound, his enjoyment of almost everything literary is lively; as critic he is kindly yet equitable. But the highest criticism is not his. Southey's vision was not sufficiently penetrative; he culls beauties, but he cannot pluck out the heart of a mystery.

His translations of romantic fiction, while faithful to

their sources, aim less at literal exactitude than at giving the English reader the same pleasure which the Spaniard receives from the originals. From the destruction of Don Quixote's library Master Nicholas and the curate spared *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin of England*. Second to Malory's grouping of the Arthur cycle *Amadis* may well take its place. Its chivalric spirit, its wildness, its tenderness and beauty are carefully preserved by the translator. But Southey's chief gift in this kind to English readers is *The Cid*. The poem he supposed, indeed, to be a metrical chronicle instead of a metrical romance—no fatal error; weaving together the best of the poem, the ballads and the chronicle, he produced more than a mere compilation. "I know no work of the kind in our language," wrote Coleridge, "none which, uniting the charms of romance and history, keeps the imagination so constantly on the wing, and yet leaves so much for after reflection."

Of Southey's political writings something has been said in a former chapter. Among works which can be brought under no general head, one that pleased the public was *Espriella's Letters*, sketches of English landscape, life, and manners, by a supposed Spanish traveller. The letters, giving as they do a lively view of England at the beginning of the present century, still possess an interest. Apart from Southey's other works stands *The Doctor;* nowhere else can one find so much of his varied erudition, his genial spirits, his meditative wisdom. It asks for a leisurely reader content to ramble everywhere and no whither, and still pleased to take another turn because his companion has not yet come to an end of learning, mirth, or meditation. That the author of a book so characteristic was not instantly recognized is strange. "The wit and humour of *The Doctor*," says Edgar Poe, a keen critic, "have sel-

dom been equalled. We cannot think Southey wrote it." Gratitude is due to Doctor Daniel Dove from innumerable "good little women and men," who have been delighted with his story of *The Three Bears*. To know that he had added a classic to the nursery would have been the pride of Southey's heart. Wide eyes entranced and peals of young laughter still make a triumph for one whose spirit, grave with a man's wisdom, was pure as the spirit of a little child.

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THE END.

Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

English Men of Letters

EDITED BY JOHN MORLEY

LANDOR

LANDOR

BY

SIDNEY COLVIN, M.A.

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE,
AND SLADE PROFESSOR OF FINE ART, CAMBRIDGE.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1884.

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SEVENTH THOUSAND

PREFATORY NOTE.

The standard and indispensable authority on the life of Landor is the work of the late Mr. John Forster, viz.:—

1. Forster, John: Walter Savage Landor, a Biography, London, Chapman and Hall; first edition in 2 vols., 1869; second edition, abridged, forming vol. i. of the collected "Life and Works of Walter Savage Landor" in 8 vols., 1876.

Mr. Forster was appointed by Landor himself as his literary executor; he had command of all the necessary materials for his task, and his book is written with knowledge, industry, affection, and loyalty of purpose. But it is cumbrous in comment, inconclusive in criticism, and vague on vital points, especially on points of bibliography, which in the case of Landor are frequently both interesting and obscure. The student of Landor must supplement the work of Mr. Forster from other sources, of which the principal are the following:—

2. Hunt, J. E. Leigh, Lord Byron and his contemporaries. London, 1827.
3. Blessington, Marguerite, Countess of, The Idler in Italy, 2 vols., London, 1839. Lady Blessington's first impressions of Landor are reported in vol. ii. of the above; her correspondence with him, and an Imaginary Conversation by Landor not elsewhere reprinted, will be found in
4. Madden, R. R., The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington, 3 vols. London, 1855.
5. The New Spirit of the Age, edited by R. H. Horne. 2 vols. London, 1844. The article on Landor in vol. i. of the above is by Miss Barrett, afterwards Mrs. Browning, supplemented by the editor.

6. Emerson, R. W., English Traits. London, 1856.
7. Field, Kate, Last Days of Walter Savage Landor, a series of three articles in the Atlantic Monthly Magazine for 1866.
8. Robinson, H. Crabbe, Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of, edited by Thomas Sadler, 3 vols. London, 1869.
9. Dickens, Charles: A short article on Forster's "Biography" in All the Year Round for 1869, supplementing with some striking physiognomic touches the picture of Landor drawn by the same hand in "Bleak House" (see below, p. 176).
10. Linton, Mrs. E. Lynn: Reminiscences of Walter Savage Landor, in Fraser's Magazine for July, 1870; by far the best account of the period of Landor's life to which it refers.
11. Houghton, Lord: Monographs. London, 1873.

I forbear to enumerate the various articles on Landor and his works which I have consulted in reviews and magazines between the dates 1798 and 1870; several of the most important are mentioned in the text. In addition to the materials which exist in print, I have had the advantage of access to some unpublished. To Mr. Robert Browning in particular my thanks are due for his great kindness in allowing me to make use of the collection of books and manuscripts left him by Landor, including Landor's own annotated copies of some of his rarest writings, and a considerable body of his occasional jottings and correspondence. Mr. Augustus J. C. Hare was also good enough to put into my hands a number of letters written by Landor to his father and to himself. To Lord Houghton I am indebted for help of various kinds, and to Mr. Swinburne for his most friendly pains in looking through the sheets of my work, and for many valuable suggestions and corrections.

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LANDOR.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE—SCHOOL—COLLEGE.
(1775—1794.)

FEW men have ever impressed their peers so much, or the general public so little, as WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR. Of all celebrated authors, he has hitherto been one of the least popular. Nevertheless he is among the most striking figures in the history of English literature; striking alike by his character and his powers. Personally, Landor exercised the spell of genius upon every one who came near him. His gifts, attainments, impetuosities, his originality, his force, his charm, were all of the same conspicuous and imposing kind. Not to know what is to be known of so remarkable a man is evidently to be a loser. Not to be familiar with the works of so noble a writer is to be much more of a loser still.

The place occupied by Landor among English men of letters is a place apart. He wrote on many subjects and in many forms, and was strong both in imagination and in criticism. He was equally master of Latin and English, and equally at home in prose and verse. He cannot

properly be associated with any given school, or indeed with any given epoch, of our literature, as epochs are usually counted, but stands alone, alike by the character of his mind and by the tenour and circumstances of his life. It is not easy to realize that a veteran who survived to receive the homage of Mr. Swinburne, can have been twenty-five years old at the death of Cowper, and forty-nine at the death of Byron. Such, however, was the case of Landor. It is less than seventeen years since he died, and less than eighteen since he published his last book; his first book had been published before Buonaparte was consul. His literary activity extended, to be precise, over a period of sixty-eight years (1795—1863). Neither was his career more remarkable for its duration than for its proud and consistent independence. It was Landor's strength as well as his weakness that he was all his life a law to himself, writing in conformity with no standards and in pursuit of no ideals but his own.

So strong, indeed, was this instinct of originality in Landor that he declines to fall in with the thoughts or to repeat the words of others even when to do so would be most natural. Though an insatiable and retentive reader, in his own writing he does not choose to deal in the friendly and commodious currency of quotation, allusion, and reminiscence. Everything he says must be his own and nothing but his own. On the other hand it is no part of Landor's originality to provoke attention, as many even of illustrious writers have done, by emphasis or singularity of style. Arbitrary and vehement beyond other men in many of his thoughts, in their utterance he is always sober and decorous. He delivers himself of whatever is in his mind with an air, to borrow an expression of his

own, "majestically sedate." Again, although in saying what he chooses to say Landor is one of the clearest and most direct of writers, it is his pleasure to leave much unsaid of that which makes ordinary writing easy and effective. He is so anxious to avoid saying what is superfluous that he does not always say what is necessary. As soon as he has given adequate expression to any idea, he leaves it and passes on to the next, forgetting sometimes to make clear to the reader the connexion of his ideas with one another.

These qualities of unbending originality, of lofty self-control, and of deliberate parsimony in utterance, are evidently not the qualities to carry the world by storm. Neither did Landor expect to carry the world by storm. He wrote less for the sake of pleasing others than himself. He addressed a scanty audience while he lived, but looked forward with confidence to one that should be more numerous in the future, although not very numerous even then. "I shall dine late; but the dining-room will be well-lighted, the guests few and select." In the meantime Landor contented himself with the applause he had, and considering whence that applause came, he had indeed good reason to be content. His early poem of *Gebir* was the delight first of Southey and afterwards of Shelley, who at college used to declaim it with an enthusiasm which disconcerted his friends, and which years did not diminish. The admiration of Southey for Landor's poetry led the way to an ardent and lasting friendship between the two men. By Wordsworth Landor was regarded less warmly than by Southey, yet with a respect which he extended to scarcely any other writer of his time. Hazlitt, who loved Wordsworth little and Southey less, and on whose dearest predilections Landor unsparingly

trampled, nevertheless acknowledged the force of his genius. Charles Lamb was at one time as great a reader and quoter of *Gebir* as Shelley himself, and at another could not dismiss from his mind or lips the simple cadences of one of Landor's elegies. De Quincey declared that his Count Julian was a creation worthy to take rank beside the Prometheus of Æschylus, or Milton's Satan. As the successive volumes of his *Imaginary Conversations* appeared, they seemed to some of the best minds of the time to contain masterpieces almost unprecedented not only of English composition, but of insight, imagery, and reflection. The society of their author was sought and cherished by the most distinguished of his countrymen. The members of the scholar family of Hare, and those of the warrior family of Napier, were among his warmest admirers and closest friends. Coming down to a generation of which the survivors are still with us, Dickens, Carlyle, Emerson, Lord Houghton, Robert and Elizabeth Browning, have been among those who have delighted to honour him; and the list might be brought down so as to include names of all degrees of authority and standing. While the multitude has ignored Landor, he has been for three generations teaching and charming those who in their turn have taught and charmed the multitude.

By his birthplace, as he loved to remember, Landor was a neighbour of the greatest English poets. He was born at Warwick on the 30th of January, 1775. He was proud of his lineage, and fond of collecting evidences of its antiquity. His family had in fact been long one of property and position in Staffordshire. He believed that it had originally borne the name of Del-a La'nd or De la Laundes, and that its descent could be traced back for

seven hundred years; for about half that time, said his less credulous or less imaginative brother. What is certain is that some of the Staffordshire Landors had made themselves heard of in the wars of King and Parliament. A whig Landor had been high sheriff of the county at the Revolution of 1688; his grandson on the other hand was a marked man for his leanings towards the house of Stuart. A son of this Jacobite Landor being head of the family in the latter part of the last century, was at the same time engaged in the practice of medicine at Warwick. This Dr. Landor was Walter Savage Landor's father.

Of Dr. Landor the accounts which have reached us are not sufficient to convey any very definite image. His memory survives only as that of a polished, sociable, agreeable, somewhat choleric gentleman, more accomplished and better educated, as his profession required, than most of those with whom he associated, but otherwise dining, coursing, telling his story and drinking his bottle without particular distinction among the rest. *Lepidus, doctus, liberalis, probus, amicis jucundissimus*—these are the titles selected for his epitaph by his sons Walter and Robert, both of them men exact in weighing words. Dr. Landor was twice married, first to a Miss Wright of Warwick, and after her death to Elizabeth Savage, of the Warwickshire family of the Savages of Tachbrook. By his first wife he had six children, all of whom, however, died in infancy except one daughter. By his second wife he had three sons and four daughters; and of this second family Walter Savage Landor was the eldest born. Both the first and the second wives of Dr. Landor were heiresses in their degree. The fortune of the first devolved by settlement upon her surviving daughter, who was in due time married to a cousin, Humphrey Arden of Longcroft. The family of the second,

that of the Savages of Tachbrook, was of better certified antiquity and distinction than his own, though the proofs by which Walter Savage Landor used to associate with it certain historical personages bearing the same name were of a somewhat shadowy nature. The father of Elizabeth Savage had been lineally the head of his house, but the paternal inheritance which she divided with her three sisters was not considerable, the family estates having passed, it seems, into the hands of two of her grand-uncles, men of business in London. By these there was bequeathed to her, after her marriage with Dr. Landor, property to the value of nearly eighty thousand pounds, consisting of the two estates of Ipsley Court and Tachbrook in Warwickshire, the former on the borders of Worcestershire, the latter close to Leamington, together with a share of the reversionary interest in a third estate—that of Hughenden Manor in Buckinghamshire—of which the name has since become familiar to us from other associations. The Warwickshire properties thus left to Mrs. Landor, as well as Dr. Landor's own family property in Staffordshire, were strictly entailed upon the eldest male issue of the marriage; so that to these united possessions Walter Savage Landor was born heir.

No one, it should seem, ever entered life under happier conditions. To the gifts of breeding and of fortune there were added at his birth the gifts of genius and of strength. But there had been evil godmothers beside the cradle as well as good, and in the composition of this powerful nature pride, anger, and precipitancy had been too treacherously mixed, to the prejudice of a noble intellect and tender heart, and to the disturbance of all his relations with his fellow-men. Of his childhood no minute record has come down to us. It seems to have been marked by neither the pre-

cocities nor the infirmities of genius. Indeed, although in after-life Landor used often to complain of ailments, of serious infirmities he knew little all his days. His mother, whose love for her children was solicitous and prudent rather than passionate or very tender, only once had occasion for anxiety as to the health of her eldest born. This was when he was seized in his twelfth year with a violent attack, not of any childish malady, but of gout; an attack which the boy endured, it is said, with clamorous resentment and impatience; and which never afterwards returned.

He had been sent as a child of only four-and-a-half to a school at Knowle, ten miles from home. Here he stayed five years or more, until he was old enough to go to Rugby. His holidays were spent between his father's professional abode in the town of Warwick, and one or other of the two country houses on the Savage estates, Ipsley Court and Tachbrook. To these homes of his boyhood Landor was accustomed all his life to look back with the most affectionate remembrance. He had a retentive memory for places, and a great love of trees and flowers. The mulberries, cedars, and fig-trees of the Warwick garden, the nut-walk and apricots of Tachbrook, afforded him joys which he never afterwards forgot. Of Warwick he writes, in his seventy-eighth year, that he has just picked up from the gravel walk the two first mulberries that have fallen, a thing he remembers having done just seventy years before: and of Tachbrook, in his seventy-seventh, "Well do I remember it from my third or fourth year; and the red filbert at the top of the garden, and the apricots from the barn wall, and Aunt Nancy cracking the stones for me. If I should ever eat apricots with you again, I shall not now cry for the kernel."

For Ipsley and its encircling stream the pleasantest expression of Landor's affection is contained in some unpublished verses, which may find their place here, although they refer to a later period of his youth.

I hope in vain to see again
  Ipsley's peninsular domain.
In youth 'twas there I used to scare
  A whirring bird or scampering hare,
And leave my book within a nook
  Where alders lean above the brook,
To walk beyond the third mill-pond,
  And meet a maiden fair and fond
Expecting me beneath a tree
  Of shade for two but not for three.
Ah! my old yew, far out of view,
  Why must I bid you both adieu.

This love of trees, flowers, and places went along in the boy with a love of books. He was proficient in school exercises, all except arithmetic, an art which, "according to the method in use," he never suceeded in mastering. At Rugby, where he went at ten, he was soon among the best Latin scholars; and he has recorded his delight over the first purchase of English books he made with his own money; the books in question being Drayton's *Polyolbion* and Baker's *Chronicle*. He tells elsewhere how the writer who first awoke in him the love of poetry was Cowper. He seems from the first to have been a greedy reader, even to the injury of his power of sleep. "I do not remember," he writes among his unpublished jottings, "that I ever slept five hours consecutively, rarely four, even in boyhood. I was much of a reader of nights, and was once flogged for sleeping at the evening lesson, which I had learnt, but having mastered it, I dozed."

This bookish boy was at the same time physically strong and active, though not particularly dexterous.

Dancing, to his own great chagrin, he could never learn, and on horseback his head was too full of thoughts to allow him much to mind his riding. At boxing, cricket, and football, he could hold his own well. But the sport he loved was fishing with a cast-net; at this he was really skilful, and apt in the pursuit to break bounds and get into trouble. One day he was reported for having flung his net over, and victoriously held captive, a farmer who tried to interfere with his pastime; another day, for having extorted a nominal permission to fish where he had no sort of business from a passing butcher who had no sort of authority to give it. A fag, whose unlucky star he had chosen all one afternoon to regard as the cause of his bad sport, remembered all his life Landor's sudden change of demeanour, and his own poignant relief, when the taking of a big fish convinced him that the said star was not unlucky after all. Like many imaginative boys to whose summer musings the pools and shallows of English lowland streams have seemed as full of romance as Eurotas or Scamander, he loved nothing so well as to wander by the brook-side, sometimes with a sporting, but sometimes also with a studious intent. He recalls these pleasures in a retrospective poem of his later years, *On Swift joining Avon near Rugby.*

In youth how often at thy side I wander'd;
What golden hours, hours numberless, were squander'd
    Among thy sedges, while sometimes
    I meditated native rhymes,
And sometimes stumbled upon Latian feet;
    There, where soft mole-built seat
    Invited me, I noted down
    What must full surely win the crown;
But first impatiently vain efforts made
On broken pencil with a broken blade.

Again, one of the most happily turned of all Landor's Latin poems expresses his regret that his eldest son, born in Italy, will never learn to know and love the English streams which had been the delight of his own youth. And once more, he records how the subject of that most perfect of dramatic dialogues, *Leofric and Godiva*, had first occupied him as a boy. He had written a little poem on the subject as he sat by the square pool at Rugby—"may the peppermint still be growing on the bank in that place!" —and he remembers the immoderate laughter with which his attempt was received by the friend to whom he confided it, and his own earnestness in beseeching that friend not to tell the lads—"so heart-strickenly and desperately was I ashamed."

Landor, it thus appears, had acquired in his earliest school days the power and the habit, which remained with him until almost the hour of his death, of writing verses for his own pleasure both in Latin and English. As regards Latin, he is the one known instance in which the traditional classical education of our schools took full effect, and was carried out to its furthest practical consequences. Not only did Latin become in boyhood and remain to the last a second mother tongue to him; his ideal of behaviour at the same time modelled itself on the ancient Roman, and that not alone in things convenient. Not content with taking Cato or Scipio or Brutus for his examples, when he was offended he instinctively betook himself to the weapons of Catullus and Martial. Now a schoolboy's alcaics and hendecasyllabics may be never so well turned, but if their substance is both coarse and savage, and if moreover they are directed against that schoolboy's master, the result can hardly be to his advantage. And thus it fell out with Landor. He might easily have been

the pride of the school, for whatever were his faults of temper, his brilliant scholarship could not fail to recommend him to his teachers, nor his ready kindness towards the weak, his high spirit and sense of honour to his companions. He was pugnacious, but only against the strong. "You remember," he writes, in some verses addressed seventy years later to an old school companion—

> You remember that I fought
> Never with any but an older lad,
> And never lost but two fights in thirteen.

Neither would it much have stood in Landor's way that his lofty ideas of what was due to himself made him refuse, at school as afterwards, to compete against others for prizes or distinctions of any kind. What did stand in his way was his hot and resentful impatience alike of contradiction and of authority. Each half-holiday of the school was by a customary fiction supposed to be given as a reward for the copy of verses declared to be the best of the day, and with or without reason, Landor conceived that the head master, Dr. James, had systematically grudged this recognition to verses of his. When at last play-day was given for a copy of Landor's, the boy added in transcribing it a rude postcript, to the effect that it was the worst he had ever written. In other controversies that from time to time occurred between master and scholar, there were not wanting kindlier and more humorous passages than this. But at last there arose a quarrel over a Latin quantity, in which Landor was quite right at the outset, but by his impracticable violence put himself hopelessly in the wrong; complicating matters not only with fierce retorts, but with such verses as made authority's very hair stand on end. This was in his sixteenth year, when he was within five of being head of the

school. The upshot was that the head master wrote to Dr. Landor, with many expressions of regret, requesting that his son Walter might be removed, lest he should find himself under the necessity of expelling him as one not only rebellious himself, but a promoter of rebellion in others.

Signs of the same defiant spirit had not been wanting in his home life. The seeds seem to have been already sown of an estrangement, never afterwards altogether healed, between himself and his father. In politics Dr. Landor had been originally a zealous Whig; but he was one of those Whigs for whom the French Revolution was too much. During that crisis he was swept along the stream of alarm and indignation which found both voice and nourishment in the furious eloquence of Burke; and when the party at last broke in two he went with those who deserted Fox and became the fervent followers of Pitt. The boyish politics of young Landor were of a very different stamp. He was already, what he remained to the end of his days, an ardent republican and foe to kings. The French Revolution had little to do with making or unmaking his sentiments on these points. His earliest admiration was for Washington, his earliest and fiercest aversion for George III. And he had no idea of keeping his opinions to himself, but would insist on broaching them, no matter what the place or company. The young rebel one day cried out in his mother's room that he wished the French would invade England, and assist us in hanging George the Third between two such rascals as the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; whereupon that excellent lady was seen to rise, box his ears from behind his chair, and then hastily make off upon her high-heeled shoes for fear of consequences. Again, we hear of his fling-

ing an impetuous taunt across the table at a bishop who was dining with his father, and who had spoken slightingly of the scholarship of Porson. Nevertheless it must not be supposed that Landor, even in the rawest and most combative days of his youth, was at any time merely ill-conditioned in his behaviour. He was never without friends in whom the signs both of power and tenderness which broke through his unruly ways inspired the warmest interest and affection. Such friends included at this time the most promising of his schoolmates, more than one charming girl companion of his own family or their acquaintances, and several seniors of various orders and conditions. His principal school friends were Henry Cary, afterwards translator of Dante, and Walter Birch, an accomplished scholar who became an Oxford tutor and ended his days at a country living in Essex. Girls of his own age or older found something attractive in the proud and stubborn boy, who for all his awkwardness and headlong temper was chivalrous to them, could turn the prettiest verses, and no doubt even in speech showed already some rudiments of that genius for the art of compliment which distinguished him beyond all men in later life. Thus we find him towards his twentieth year in the habit of receiving from Dorothea Lyttelton, the beautiful orphan heiress of estates contiguous to his home, advice conveyed in terms betokening the closest intimacy and kindness. Among his elders he attached to himself as friends characters so opposite as "the elegant and generous Dr. Sleath," one of his Rugby masters, with whom he was never on any but the kindest terms; Mr. Parkhurst of Ripple, a country squire and father of one of his schoolmates; and the famous Dr. Parr, at that time and for many years perpetual curate of Hatton near Warwick. This

singular personage, in spite of many grotesque pomposities of speech, and some of character, commanded respect alike by his learning and his love of liberty. He was a pillar of advanced Whig opinions, and a friend of most of the chief men of that party. To the study where Parr lived ensconced with his legendary wig and pipe, and whence, in the lisping utterance that suited so quaintly with his sesquipedalian vocabulary, he fulminated against Pitt and laid down the law on Latin from amid piles of books and clouds of tobacco-smoke, the young Landor was wont to resort in search of company more congenial than that of the orthodox clergy and lawyers who frequented his father's house.

In speaking of these friendships of Landor's youth we have somewhat anticipated the order of events. To return to the date of his removal from Rugby; he was next placed under the charge of a Dr. Langley, at the village, celebrated for the charms of its scenery, of Ashbourne in Derbyshire. Here again he showed how strong an attachment he was capable of inspiring in, and returning towards, a gentle and friendly senior. In his dialogue of Izaak Walton, Cotton, and Oldways, Dr. Langley is immortalized in the character of the "good parson of Ashbourne;" "he wants nothing, yet he keeps the grammar school, and is ready to receive as private tutor any young gentleman in preparation for Oxford or Cambridge, but only one. They live like princes, converse like friends, and part like lovers." In a note to the same dialogue, as well as several times elsewhere, Landor explicitly declares his gratitude for the "parental kindness" of Dr. Langley and his wife, as also that which he bore all his life to two others of his teachers, the above mentioned Dr. Sleath at Rugby, and "the saintly Benwell" at Oxford.

In this kind household Landor passed nearly two years. In Latin it appears that he had not much to learn from the good vicar, but he turned his time to account in reading the Greek writers, especially Sophocles and Pindar; in translating some of Buchanan into English, and some of Cowley into Latin, verse, besides other poetical efforts in both languages. His English verses at this time show him not yet emancipated from the established precedents of the eighteenth century. It is not until a year or two later that we find him abandoning, in narrative poetry, the trim monotony of the rhyming couplet for a blank verse of more massive structure and statelier march than any which had been written since Milton.

At eighteen Landor left Ashbourne and went into residence at Trinity College, Oxford. His abilities made their impression at the university in spite of himself; but he still would not be persuaded to compete for any sort of distinction. "I showed my compositions to Birch of Magdalen, my old friend at Rugby, and to Cary, translator of Dante, and to none else." Landor's reputation for talents which he would not put forth was accompanied by a reputation for opinions which he would not conceal. The agitation of political parties was at its height. The latter course of the Revolution had alienated the majority even of those who had sympathized with it at first, and the few Englishmen who did not share the general horror were marked men. Among those few there were at Oxford in these days two undergraduates, Southey of Balliol, and Landor of Trinity. The two were not known to each other until afterwards, but they both made themselves conspicuous by appearing in hall and elsewhere with their hair unpowdered, a fashion which about 1793-1794 was a direct advertisement

of revolutionary sentiments. "Take care," said Landor's tutor to him; "they will stone you for a republican." No such consequences in fact resulted, but Landor became notorious in the University. He was known not only as a Jacobin, but as a "mad Jacobin." "His Jacobinism," says Southey, looking back to his own feelings in those days, "would have made me seek his acquaintance, but for his madness." The impression thus left on Southey's mind was probably due less to the warmth of Landor's revolutionary sentiments and language, than to the notoriety of the freak which before long brought him for the second time into violent and futile collision with authority. One evening he invited his friends to wine. He had been out shooting in the morning, and had his gun, powder, and shot in the next room. Opposite were the rooms of a Tory undergraduate, "a man," according to Landor's account, "universally laughed at and despised; and it unfortunately happened that he had a party on the same day, consisting of servitors and other raffs of every description." The two parties began exchanging taunts; then those opposite closed the shutters, which being on the outside, Landor proposed by way of a practical joke to send a charge of shot into them. His friends applauded, and he fired. The owner of the shutters naturally complained, and an inquiry was instituted to ascertain who was the offender. Landor's defiant mood at this point played him an ill turn, in that it prompted him, instead of frankly stating the facts, to refuse all information. Part of his motive in this course, as he himself afterwards explained, was his unwillingness to add to the causes of displeasure which he was conscious of having already given to his father. He could not have followed a more injudicious course. The president was

compelled to push the inquiry and to inflict punishment. This he seems to have done as leniently and considerately as possible; and when sentence of rustication was pronounced it was with the expressed hope, on the part of all the college authorities but one, that its victim would soon return to do them honour. Strangely enough, it seems also to have been hoped that a return to his home would bring about a better understanding between young Landor and his father. But so far from this being the case, his bearing after the freak, more even than the freak itself, together with his subsequent step of giving up his college rooms, exasperated Dr. Landor; passionate words were exchanged; and the son turned his back on his father's house, as he declared and believed, "for ever."

CHAPTER II.

EXPERIMENTS IN LIFE AND POETRY—GEBIR.
(1794—1804.)

From Warwick Landor went at first to London, where he took a lodging in Beaumont Street, Portland Place. Here he worked hard for several months at French and Italian, having formed the design of leaving England and taking up his abode in Italy. His Italian studies made him an ardent admirer of Alfieri, whom he always afterwards counted it an event to have met once at this time in a bookseller's shop. During these months he also brought out his first book, "The Poems of Walter Savage Landor; printed for T. Cadell, jun. and W. Davies (successors to John Cadell) in the Strand, 1795." This small volume is now very rare, having been, like several of Landor's writings, withdrawn from sale by its author within a few weeks of publication. It contained a number of poems and epigrams in English, besides a collection of Latin verses and a prose *Defensio* vindicating the use of that language by the moderns. The principal English pieces are a poem in three cantos on the *Birth of Poesy*, an *Apology for Satire*, a tale of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, imitated from Ovid, an *Epistle* of Abélard to Eloisa, all in the rhymed heroic couplet, an ode *To Washington* in the style of Gray, and a short poem in the

metre since made popular by *In Memoriam*, called *French Villagers*. Landor already shows indications of a manner more vigorous and personal than that of the current poetry of the day, but in diction as well as in the choice of metrical forms he is still under the rule of eighteenth century conventions, and writes of nymphs and swains, Bellona and the Zephyrs. At Oxford, where the rumour of his talents and the notoriety of his escapade were still fresh, his little volume seems to have made an impression, and to have been in demand as long as it remained in circulation. Another literary venture made by Landor during these months in London did not, like the last, bear his name. This was a satire against Pitt, in the form of a *Moral Epistle* in heroic verse, addressed to Earl Stanhope, with a prose preface in which the republican poet condoles with the republican peer on his possession of hereditary honours.

While the young Landor was thus engaged with poetry and politics in London, the good offices of friends, and foremost among them of the fair Dorothea Lyttelton and her uncles, had been employed in seeking to reconcile him with his family. Several propositions as to his future mode of life were successively made and dropped; one being that he should be offered a commission then vacant in the Warwickshire Militia. This scheme, however, never came to Landor's knowledge, having fallen to the ground when it was ascertained that the other gentlemen of the corps would resign rather than serve with a comrade of his opinions. The arrangement ultimately made was that he should receive an allowance of a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and be free to live as he liked, it being understood that the idea of a retreat to Italy was given up, and that he was welcome to free quarters at his father's

house whenever he pleased. If this allowance seems small, it must be remembered that Dr. Landor's family property in Staffordshire was worth something under a thousand pounds a year; while there were six younger children for whom Mrs. Landor, her estates being strictly entailed upon her eldest son, held herself bound to make provision out of her income during her life. To her careful and impartial justice towards all her children there exists abundant testimony, including that of Walter himself, whose feelings towards his mother were at all times those of unclouded gratitude and affection.

Matters having been thus arranged, Landor left London, and, with the exception of occasional visits to his family, led during the next three years a life of seclusion in South Wales. He took up his residence on the coast, of which the natural charms were not then defiled as they are now by the agglomerations and exhalations of the mining and smelting industries. Having his headquarters generally at Swansea, sometimes at Tenby, and sometimes taking excursions into remoter parts of the Principality, he filled the chief part of his time with strenuous reading and meditation. His reminiscences of the occupations of these days are preserved in sundry passages both of prose and rhyme. Thus, contrasting the tenour of his own youth with that of Moore's,—

> Alone I spent my earlier hour,
> While thou wert in the roseate bower,
> And raised to thee was every eye,
> And every song won every sigh.
> One servant and one chest of books
> Follow'd me into mountain nooks
> Where shelter'd from the sun and breeze
> Lay Pindar and Thucydides.

Among all the ancient and modern writers whom Landor read and pondered at this time, those who had most share in forming his mind seem to have been Pindar and Milton. What he admired, he says, in Pindar, was his "proud complacency and scornful strength. . If I could resemble him in nothing else, I was resolved to be as compendious and as exclusive." But the strongest spell was that laid upon him by Milton, for whom alike as a poet, hero, and republican seer and prophet, he now first conceived the enthusiastic reverence which afterwards inspired some of his noblest writing. "My prejudices in favour of ancient literature began to wear away on reading *Paradise Lost*, and even the great hexameter sounded to me tinkling when I had recited aloud, in my solitary walks on the sea-shore, the haughty appeal of Satan and the repentance of Eve." Here, from a letter written long after to Lady Blessington, is another retrospective glimpse of his life in those days. "I lived," he writes, "chiefly among woods, which are now killed with copper works, and took my walks over sandy sea-coast deserts, then covered with low roses and thousands of nameless flowers and plants, trodden by the naked feet of the Welsh peasantry, and trackless. These creatures were somewhat between me and the animals, and were as useful to the landscape as masses of weed or stranded boats." Never were his spirits better, he writes in the same connexion, although he did not exchange twelve sentences with men.

It is clear that Landor here exaggerates in some degree the loneliness of his life. If he did not exchange twelve sentences with men, he at all events found occasion for more extended parley with the other sex. He was in fact by no means as much a stranger to the roseate bower as

the verses above quoted might lead us to suppose. These days of solitary rambles and high communings, "Studies intense of strong and stern delight,"—the line is his own—were also to Landor days of romance. The earliest heroine of his devotions during his life in Wales was called in the language of poetry Ionè, and in that of daily life Jones. To her succeeded, but without, it would seem, altogether supplanting her, a second and far more serious flame. This was a blithe Irish lady, who conceived a devoted passion for the haughty and studious youth, and whom her poet called Ianthè. Ianthè stands for Jane, and the full name of the lady was Sophia Jane Swift; afterwards Countess de Molandé. I find the history of these names Ionè and Ianthè, which fill so considerable a place in Landor's early poetry, set down as follows in one of those autobiographical jottings in verse which he did not think it worth while to publish, but which are characteristic as illustrating his energetic and deliberate way of turning trifles into verse:—

Sometimes, as boys will do, I play'd at love,
Nor fear'd cold weather, nor withdrew in hot;
And two who were my playmates at that hour,
Hearing me call'd a poet, in some doubt
Challenged me to adapt their names to song.
Ionè was the first; her name is heard
Among the hills of Cambria, north and south,
But there of shorter stature, like herself;
I placed a comely vowel at its close,
And drove an ugly sibilant away.

* * * * *

Ianthè, who came later, smiled and said,
I have two names and will be praised in both;
Sophia is not quite enough for me,
And you have simply named it, and but once.
Now call the other up—

* * * * *

I went, and planted in a fresh parterre
Ianthè; it was blooming, when a youth
Leapt o'er the hedge, and snatching at the stem
Broke off the label from my favourite flower,
And stuck it on a sorrier of his own.

The sally in the last lines is curious. Both Shelley and Byron have made English readers familiar with the name Ianthè. So far as I can learn, it had not appeared in English poetry at all until it was introduced by Landor, except in Dryden's translation of the story of Iphis and Ianthè from Ovid. It was in 1813 that both Byron chose it as a fancy name for Lady Ann Harley, in the dedication of Childe Harold, and Shelley as a real name to be given to his infant daughter. The "youth" of the above extract can hardly be any other than Byron, whom Landor neither liked nor much admired, and whom he considered, as we thus perceive, to have borrowed this beautiful name Ianthè from his own early poetry.

Upon the whole the life led by Landor at twenty, and for the years next following, was one well suited to the training of a poet. He nourished his mind resolutely upon the noblest sustenance, making his own all that was best in the literatures of ancient and modern Europe; except, indeed, in the literature of Germany, which had been then barely discovered in England by a few explorers like Scott, Coleridge, and William Taylor of Norwich, and to which Landor neither now nor afterwards felt himself attracted. He haunted, moreover, with the keenest enjoyment of its scenery, a region hardly less romantic or less impressive than that which was inspiring at the same time the youth of Wordsworth. If he was inclined to trifle with the most serious of things, love, that is a fault by which the quality of a man's life suffers, but not necessarily the quality of his song; and

experiences both more transient and more reckless than his have made of a Burns or a Heine the exponents of the passion for all generations.

Landor, however, was not destined to be one of the master poets either of nature, like Wordsworth, or of passion, like Burns or Heine. All his life he gave proof, in poetry, of remarkable and versatile capacity, but of no overmastering vocation. So little sure, indeed, in youth was he of his own vocation, that his first important poem, *Gebir*, was suggested by an accident and prefaced with an apology. The history of *Gebir* is this: Landor had made friends at Tenby with the family of Lord Aylmer, and one of the young ladies of that family, his especial and close friend Rose Aylmer, lent him a history of romance by one Clara Reeve. At the end of this book he found a sketch of a tale, nominally Arabian, which struck his imagination as having in it something of a shadowy, antique grandeur—*magnificum quid sub crepusculo antiquitatis*, as he afterwards defined the quality—and out of which he presently constructed the following story. Gebir (whence Gibraltar) a prince of Spain, in fulfilment of a vow binding him to avenge hereditary wrongs, makes war against Charoba, a young queen of Egypt. Charoba seeks counsel of her nurse, the sorceress Dalica, who devises succour through her magic arts. An interview next takes place between Charoba and the invader, when their enmity changes into mutual love. Gebir hereupon directs his army to restore and colonize a ruined city which had been founded in the country of Charoba by one of his ancestors; and the work is begun and carried on until it is suddenly undone by magic. Meanwhile the brother of Gebir, Tamar, a shepherd-prince, whose task it is to tend the flocks of the

invading host, has in his turn fallen in love with an ocean nymph, who had encountered and beaten him in wrestling. Gebir persuades Tamar to let *him* try a fall with the nymph, and throwing her, learns from her, first promising that she shall have the hand of Tamar for her reward, the rites to be performed in order that his city may rise unimpeded. In the fulfilment of these rites Gebir visits the under-world, and beholds the shades of his ancestors. After his return it is agreed that he shall be wedded to Charoba. Tamar also and his nymph are to be united; their marriage takes place first, and the nymph, warning her husband of calamities about to befall in Egypt, persuades him to depart with her, and after leading him in review past all the shores of the Mediterranean, unfolds to him a vision of the glory awaiting his descendants in the lands between the Rhine and the Garonne. Then follows the marriage of Gebir and Charoba, which they and their respective hosts intend to be the seal of a great reconciliation. But, inasmuch as "women communicate their fears more willingly than their love," Charoba has never avowed her change of heart to Dalica, who believes the marriage to be only a stratagem devised by the queen to get Gebir within her power. Accordingly she gives the bridegroom, to put on during the ceremony, a poisoned garment which she has obtained from her sister, a sorceress stronger than herself. The poison takes effect, and the poem ends with the death of Gebir in the arms of the despairing Charoba, and in view of the assembled hosts.

Such is the plot, shadowy in truth and somewhat chaotic, of Landor's first considerable poem. In his preface he declares the work to be "the fruit of Idleness and Ignorance; for had I been a botanist or a mineralogist, it

had never been written." We ought, however, to qualify these careless words of the preface, by remembering those of the poem itself, in which he invokes the spirit of Shakspeare, and tells how—

> —— panting in the play-hour of my youth,
> I drank of Avon, too, a dangerous draught
> That roused within the feverish thirst of song.

Having determined to write *Gebir*, Landor hesitated for some time whether to do so in Latin or in English, and had even composed some portions in the former language before he finally decided in favour of the latter. And then, when he had written his first draft of the poem in English, he lost the manuscript, and only recovered it after a considerable time. Here is his account of the matter as he recollected it in old age,—

> Sixty the years since Fidler bore
> My grouse-bag up the Bala moor;
> Above the lakes, along the lea,
> Where gleams the darkly yellow Dee;
> Through crags, o'er cliffs, I carried there
> My verses with paternal care,
> But left them, and went home again
> To wing the birds upon the plain.
> With heavier luggage half forgot,
> For many months they follow'd not.
> When over Tawey's sands they came,
> Brighter flew up my winter flame,
> And each old cricket sang alert
> With joy that they had come unhurt.

When he had recovered the manuscript of his poem, Landor next proceeded to condense it. He cuts out, he tells us, nearly half of what he had written. The poem as so abridged is, for its length, probably the most "compendious and exclusive" which exists. The narrative is packed into a space where it has no room to develope itself

at ease. The transitions from one theme to another are effected with more than Pindaric abruptness, and the difficulty of the poem is further increased by the occurrence of grammatical constructions borrowed from the Latin, and scarcely intelligible to those ignorant of that language. It is only after considerable study that the reader succeeds in taking in *Gebir* as a whole, however much he may from the first be impressed by the power of particular passages. Next to the abruptness and the condensation of *Gebir*, its most striking qualities are breadth and vividness of imagination. Taken severally, and without regard to their sequence and connexion, these colossal figures and supernatural actions are presented with masterly reality and force. As regards style and language, Landor shows that he has not been studying the great masters in vain. He has discarded Bellona and the Zephyrs, and calls things by their proper names, admitting no heightening of language that is not the natural expression of heightened thought. For loftiness of thought and language together, there are passages in *Gebir* that will bear comparison with Milton. There are lines too that for majesty of rhythm will bear the same comparison; but majestic as Landor's blank verse often is, it is always too regular; it exhibits none of the Miltonic variety, none of the inventions in violation or suspension of ordinary metrical law, by which that great master draws unexampled tones from his instrument.

Here, indeed, was a contrast to the fashionable poetry of the hour, to the dulcet inanities of Hayley and of Miss Seward. *Gebir* appeared just at the mid point of time between the complaint of Blake concerning the truancy of the Muses from England,

> The languid strings do scarcely move,
> The sound is forced, the notes are few,

and the thanksgiving of Keats,

> ——— fine sounds are floating wild
> About the earth.

Of the fine sounds that heralded to modern ears the revival of English poetry, *Gebir* will always remain for students one of the most distinctive. The *Lyrical Ballads*, the joint venture of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which appeared in the same year as *Gebir*, began with the *Ancient Mariner*, a work of even more vivid and haunting, if also more unearthly, imagery, and ended with the *Lines written on revisiting Tintern Abbey*, which conveyed the first notes of a far deeper spiritual message. But nowhere in the works of Wordsworth or Coleridge do we find anything resembling Landor's peculiar qualities of haughty splendour and massive concentration. The message, such as it is, of *Gebir* is mainly political and philanthropic. The tragic end of the hero and his bride is designed to point a moral against the enterprises of hatred and ambition, the happy fates of Tamar and the nymph to illustrate the reward that awaits the peaceful. The progeny whom the latter pair see in a vision celebrating the triumphs of liberty are intended to symbolize the people of revolutionary France. The passage describing their festivity, cancelled in subsequent editions, is one of the best in the original poem, and its concluding image may serve to illustrate both the style and the versification of *Gebir* at least as well as other passages more commonly quoted, like the shell, the meeting of the prince and Charoba, or the bath of Charoba.

What hoary form so vigorous vast bends here?
Time, Time himself throws off his motley garb,
Figured with monstrous men and monstrous gods,
And in pure vesture enters their pure fanes,
A proud partaker of their festivals.
Captivity led captive, war o'erthrown,
They shall o'er Europe, shall o'er earth extend
Empire that seas alone and skies confine,
And glory that shall strike the crystal stars.

In the same spirit Buonaparte is included among the descendants of Tamar, and his birth foreshadowed as that of

A mortal man above all mortal praise;

On the other hand George III. is introduced, with a lordly neglect of the considerations of time and space, among the ancestors of Gebir suffering the penalty of their crimes in the nether regions. "Aroar," cries the prince to his guide,

Aroar, what wretch that nearest us? What wretch
Is that with eyebrows white, and slanting brow?

(In conversation, it may be mentioned, Landor had another formula for expressing his aversion for the physical appearance of his sovereign. He had only seen him once, and "his eyes," he was accustomed to say, "his eyes looked as if they had been cut out of a vulture's gizzard.") In taking leave of *Gebir*, let us only note farther the personal allusions which it contains in two passages to Landor's relations with his Ionè. One is a direct apostrophe in which he celebrates her beauties; her cheeks, her temples, her lips, her eyes, her throat, which he calls love's column

Marmoreal, trophied round with golden hair.

In the other passage she is introduced among the choir of nymphs attendant upon the bride of Tamar:—

> Scarce the sweet-flowing music he imbibes,
> Or sees the peopled Ocean; scarce he sees
> Spio with sparkling eyes, or Beroè
> Demure, and young Ionè, less renown'd,
> Not less divine, mild-natured, Beauty form'd
> Her face, her heart Fidelity; for gods
> Design'd, a mortal, too, Ionè loved.

Landor was at all times sensible enough of the difference between his own marble and other men's stucco; and he expected great things of *Gebir*. At the same time, he published it in the manner least likely to ensure success, that is anonymously, and in pamphlet shape, through a local publisher at Warwick. Considering the reception given twenty years afterwards to the poetry of Keats and Shelley, it is no wonder that *Gebir* was neglected. The poem found indeed one admirer, and that was Southey, who read it with enthusiasm, recommended it in speech and writing to his friends, Cobbe, William Taylor, Grosvenor Bedford, the Hebers, and in the year following its publication (1799) called public attention to it in the pages of the *Critical Review*. Another distinguished admirer, of some years later date, was De Quincey, who was accustomed to profess, although Landor scouted the profession, that he also had for some time "conceited himself" to be the sole purchaser and appreciater of *Gebir*. Southey's praise in the *Critical Review* was soon balanced by a disparaging article in the *Monthly*, in which the anonymous author was charged, among other things, with having too closely imitated Milton. To this Landor prepared a reply, written, to judge by the specimens given in Forster's *Life*, in just the same solid, masculine, clenching style with which we are familiar in

his later prose, but withheld from publication in deference to the judicious advice of a friend.

Whether the scant success of his poem really had anything to do with the restlessness of Landor's life and the desultoriness of his efforts during the next few years, we can hardly tell. He says himself, in his lofty way, that if even foolish men had cared for *Gebir*, he should have continued to apply himself to poetry, since "there is something of summer in the hum of insects." As it was he allowed himself to drift. He began to diversify his exile with frequent and prolonged visits to Bath, London, Brighton. He tried his powers fitfully in many directions. Dr. Parr was eager to enlist his young friend in the ranks of Whig journalism, and persuaded him to place himself in relations with Robert Adair, the right-hand man in these matters of Charles James Fox; under whose guidance Landor became for a while a frequenter of the reporter's gallery, a contributor to the *Courier*, and a butt for the attacks of the *Anti-Jacobin*. In scorn and denunciation of "the Execrable," that is to say of Pitt and of his policy, Landor could be trusted not to fail; but in support of Fox and his, it was unsafe to count upon him too far. He was not, indeed, of the stuff of which practically effective political writers are made. While he despised party watchwords and party men, his temperament was not dispassionate enough for wise neutrality. His political writings, as we shall see, testify to a staunch and high devotion to the great principles of freedom and of justice, as well as to a just observation of many of the broad facts of politics and society. But in dealing with individual problems and persons Landor knows no measure, and is capable neither of allowance nor abatement. In his eyes all champions of liberty are

for the time being spotless heroes; nearly all kings, tyrants to be removed by the dagger or the rope; and with a few shining exceptions, most practical politicians knaves and fools.

How long Landor's connexion with the *Courier* lasted does not appear; but it was at any rate not terminated till the resignation of Pitt, and the formation of the Addington Ministry in 1801. This event exasperated the Whig party, and especially Parr, whose correspondence with Landor at this time consists of pompous and elaborate diatribes, the substance of which he entreats his young friend to recast for publication in the party sheet. Then ensued the peace of Lunéville; and in the next year, 1802, the peace of Amiens. Landor, like all the world, took the opportunity to visit Paris; but like himself, declined to accept introductions or to pay any kind of personal homage to the victorious Consul or to his ministers. His, at least, was not one among the feeble heads, to slavery prone, upon which Wordsworth poured scorn on the same occasion. Landor travelled alone, made his own observations on the people and the country; witnessed, from the illuminated garden of the Tuileries, the young conqueror's reception by the multitude when he appeared at the window of the palace, and contrived, in the great review afterwards, to get a place within a few feet of him as he rode by. Of all this Landor wrote fully and unaffectedly at the time in letters, which have been preserved, to his sisters and brothers. Here, written ten years afterwards, and coloured by a certain measure of deliberate and in truth somewhat overmagniloquent rhetoric, is his account of the reflexions to which another incident of his Paris trip gave rise; I mean his visit to the spoils of art there collected in

the Louvre from the churches and galleries of Italy and of all Europe. "I went," he says "with impatient haste to behold these wonders of their age and of all ages succeeding, but no sooner had I ascended a few steps leading to them than I leaned back involuntarily against the balusters, and my mind was overshadowed and almost overpowered by these reflections. Has then the stupidity of men who could not, in the whole course of their existence, have given birth to anything equal to the smallest of the works above, been the cause of their removal from the country of those who produced them! Kings, whose fatuity would have befitted them better to drive a herd of swine than to direct the energies of a nation! Well, well! I will lose for a moment the memory of their works in contemplating those of greater men."

The events of the last five years had had no more effect than those of the five preceding them in modifying the essential points of Landor's political creed. The portents of the Directory and Consulate had no more been able than the orgies of the Terror to disgust him with republicanism or to reconcile him to monarchy. He had shared, indeed, the chagrin and reprobation with which all friends of liberty looked on the subversion by revolutionary France, now that she was transformed into a conquering power, of ancient liberties outside her borders. But it was France only, and not the Revolution, that Landor held guilty. He had by this time conceived for that country and its inhabitants an aversion in which he never afterwards wavered. "A scoundrel of a Frenchman—tautology *quantum* scoundrel—did so and so," he wrote once to Hare, and the words convey his sentiments on the subject in a nutshell. The French are for him henceforward the most

ferocious, the most inconstant, the most ungovernable of human beings. "As to the cause of liberty," he writes from Paris to his brother in 1802, "this cursed nation has ruined it for ever." The fault in his eyes is not nearly so much that of their new master as their own. Buonaparte is indeed no longer for Landor the mortal man above all mortal praise of *Gebir*, any more than the French people are the peaceful progeny of Tamar; but he is the best ruler for such a race. "Doubtless the government of Buonaparte is the best that can be contrived for Frenchmen. Monkeys must be chained, though it may cost them some grimaces." And again, reiterating the same idea more gravely ten years afterwards, Landor writes:—"No people is so incapable of governing itself as the French, and no government is so proper for it as a despotic and a military one. A nation more restless and rapacious than any horde in Tartary can be controlled only by a Ghenghiz Khan. . . . Their emperor has acted towards them with perfect wisdom, and will leave to some future Machiavelli, if Europe should again see so consummate a politician, a name which may be added to Agathocles and Cæsar Borgia. He has amused himself with a display of every character from Masaniello up to Charlemagne, but in all his pranks and vagaries he has kept one foot upon Frenchmen."

This whimsical energy of dislike extends from the political to the private characteristics of the French; to their looks, their voices and manners, and even to the scenery and climate of their country. "Of all the coasts," it is declared in one of his dialogues, "of all the coasts in the universe, of the same extent, those of France for nearly their totality in three seas are the least beautiful and the least interesting." "The children, the dogs the

frogs, are more clamorous than ours; the cocks are shriller." The language of the French, as a language, Landor also thinks deplorable, but he is too good a judge of letters to extend his contempt to their writings. He was solidly and familiarly versed in the great French writers from Montaigne and Rabelais down, and though he did scant justice to Voltaire, and saw the weakness rather than the strength of the French poetical drama, he thought many of their prose writers second only, if second at all, to the best of antiquity. The style of Rousseau in particular he thought incomparable. He held also in high admiration the great French oratorical divines, and felt and valued to the full the combined pregnancy and simplicity of thought and utterance which distinguish those two pre-eminent classics in verse and prose respectively, La Fontaine and Pascal. "Do we find in Pascal anything of the lying, gasconading, vapouring Frenchman? On the contrary, we find, in despite of the most miserable language, all the sober and retired graces of style, all the confident ease of manliness and strength, with an honest but not abrupt simplicity which appeals to the reason, but is also admitted to the heart."

To return to the history of Landor's occupations, in 1800 he had published, in the shape of an unbound quarto pamphlet of fourteen pages, a collection of short "Poems from the Arabic and Persian," written in irregular unrhymed verses, principally anapæstic. An autograph note added in old age to his own copy says—"I wrote these poems after reading what had been translated from the Arabic and Persian by Sir W. Jones and Dr. Nott." In his preface Landor professes to have followed a French version of the originals, but neither such version nor such originals are known to exist;

and it may be safely inferred that both the statement of the preface and the elaborate notes appended to each poem are so much mystification. The pamphlet is of extreme rarity, and its contents were not reprinted until 1858. I give by way of example the following characteristic and taking little piece with which it concludes :—

> Oh Rahdi, where is happiness?
> Look from your arcade, the sun rises from Busrah;
> Go thither, it rises from Ispahan.
> Alas, it rises neither from Ispahan nor Busrah,
> But from an ocean impenetrable to the diver.
> Oh, Rahdi, the sun is happiness.

To which Landor adds a note to say that "this poem resembles not those ridiculous quibbles which the English in particular call epigrams, but rather, abating some little for *Orientalism*, those exquisite *Eidyllia*, those carvings as it were on ivory or on gems, which are modestly called epigrams by the Greeks."

This little publication, as was natural from its shape and and character, attracted no attention, nor did Landor attempt anything in the same manner afterwards. Two years later, immediately before his expedition to Paris in 1802, he put forth another small volume under the title of "Poetry, by the author of Gebir." This contains two short narrative poems in blank verse—*Chrysaor* and the *Phocæans*, besides a few miscellaneous lyrics in Latin and English. Landor's mind was still occupied with the mythic past of Baetic Spain; and *Chrysaor* is an episode of the war between Gods and Titans, in which Gades, Cadiz, is severed from the mainland by Neptune at the request of Jove. Both in subject and in treatment it seems to foreshadow the *Hyperion* of Keats, except that the manner of the elder poet is more massive, more

concentrated, and proportionately less lucid than that of the younger. To my mind *Chrysaor* is Landor's finest piece of narrative writing in blank verse; less monotonous in its movement than *Gebir*, more lofty and impassioned than any of the later "Hellenics" with which it was afterwards incorporated. At the time of its publication this poem made a deep impression upon Wordsworth.[1] The *Phocæans*, on the other hand, which tells of the foundation of the colony of Massilia by emigrants of that race, a subject which had been in Landor's mind since Oxford days, is so fragmentary and so obscure as to baffle the most tenacious student. It contains, like all Landor's early poetry, images both condensed and vivid, as well as weighty reflections weightily expressed; but in its sequence and incidents the poem is, to me at least, unintelligible. So at the time it seems to have been found by Southey, who hastened to review this new publication by the unknown object of his previous enthusiasm, but could find little to say in its praise.

Another task which occupied Landor at this time was the re-editing of *Gebir*, in conjunction with his brother Robert, then at Oxford. In order to make the poem more popular, the brothers reprinted it with arguments and notes; some of the latter being intended to clear up difficulties, others to modify points concerning which, as for instance, the character of Buonaparte, the author had changed his mind. At the same time they published separately a Latin translation, which, together with a

[1] In the final collected edition of Landor's writings (1876), *Chrysaor* is inadvertently printed as part of the same poem with *Regeneration*, which was written twenty years later, and with which it has nothing at all to do.

scholarly and vigorous preface in the same language, Walter had prepared expressly at Robert's instigation by way of helping the piece into popularity. These, it must be remembered, were the days of Vincent Bourne, Bobus Smith, Frere, Canning, and Wellesley, when the art of Latin versification was studied, practised, and enjoyed not in scholastic circles alone, but by a select public of the most distinguished Englishmen; so that there was not quite so much either of pedantry or of simplicity in the fraternal enterprise as appeared at first sight.

At the end of the volume of "Poetry" published in 1802 there had already appeared one or two lyrics referring, though not yet under that name, to the lady whom Landor afterwards called Ianthè. More were appended, and this time with the name, to yet another experimental scrap of a volume in verse, having for its chief feature a tale in eight-syllable rhyme called *Gunlaug and Helga*, suggested by Herbert's translation from the Icelandic. This appeared in 1804 or 1805, while Robert Landor was still at Oxford, and by him, if by no one else, was dutifully reviewed in a periodical of his own creation, the *Oxford Review*. From these years, about 1802—1806, dates the chief part of Landor's verses written to or about Ianthè. Whether in the form of praise, of complaint, or of appeal, these verses are for the most part general in their terms, and do not enable us definitely to retrace the course of an attachment on which Landor never ceased to look back as the strongest of his life, and for the object of which he continued until her death to entertain the most chivalrous and tender friendship. Landor's verses in this class, although not in the first rank of love-poetry, nevertheless express much contained passion in their grave, concise way, and

seldom fail to include, within the polished shell of verse, a solid and appropriate kernel, however minute, of thought. Here, in a somewhat depressed and ominous key, is a good example of the style :—

> I held her hand, the pledge of bliss,
> Her hand that trembled and withdrew,
> She bent her head before my kiss—
> My heart was sure that hers was true.
>
> Now I have told her I must part,
> She shakes my hand, she bids adieu,
> Nor shuns the kiss—alas, my heart!
> Hers never was the heart for you.

In other pieces we get a more outspoken tale of past delights and of the pain of present separation. The lady went abroad, and the restlessness of Landor's life increased. He moved frequently between Wales, Bath, Clifton, Warwick, Oxford, and London. We find him in close correspondence, generally on subjects of literature or scholarship, with his friends Cary and Birch. Another of his intimate friends of the years just preceding these had been Rough, a young lawyer married to a daughter of Wilkes, and then of a shining promise which smouldered off later into disappointment and mediocrity. With him Landor on slight occasion or none had about this time one of his impulsive, irreconcilable quarrels. In the meantime his father's health was gradually and painfully breaking up. It was evident that Walter would soon come into possession of the patrimonial portion of his inheritance. He did not wait that event to outrun his allowance. We find him buying a horse one day, a Titian another, a Hogarth on the third; and generally beginning to assume the habits of a gentleman of property and taste. He was full at the same time of lofty schemes, literary and other. The expedition of the fleet

under Nelson called forth some verses of which we cannot but regret the loss, and in which the writer seemed, to quote the friend to whom he addressed them, "to have been inspired by the prophetic spirit ascribed to the poets of old, and to have anticipated the glorious victory of Nelson, the news of which had reached me just before I received them." The victory in question was the battle of Trafalgar, and between the date of this letter, November 11, 1805, and Christmas of the same year, Dr. Landor had died, and Walter had come into possession of his patrimony.

CHAPTER III.

MORE EXPERIMENTS AND MARRIAGE—BATH—SPAIN—LLANTHONY—COUNT JULIAN.

(1805—1814.)

As soon as he was his own master, Landor proceeded to enlarge his style of living in proportion to his increased means, or rather beyond such proportion as it turned out. He continued to make Bath his headquarters, and, externally at least, lived there for some time the life of any other young, although indeed he was not now so very young, Fortunio. His political opinions were a source of some scandal, and it was remarked that any other man talking as Landor talked would have been called to account for it over and over again. Once or twice, indeed, it seems as if collisions had only been averted by the good offices of friends; but there was something about Landor which did not encourage challenge; partly, no doubt, his obvious intrepidity, and partly, we may infer, his habitual exactness on the point of personal courtesy even in the midst of his most startling sallies. Perhaps, too, republicanism seemed to lose something of its odiousness in a gentleman of Landor's known standing and fortune. Common report exaggerated at this time his wealth and his expectations, and his own prodigality in the matter of horses, carriages, servants, plate, pictures, and the like, lent coun-

tenance to the exaggeration. In his personal habits, it must at the same time be noted, Landor was now, as always, frugal. He drank water, or only the lightest wines, and ate fastidiously indeed, but sparely. All his life he would touch no viands but such as were both choice and choicely dressed, and he preferred to eat them alone, or in the company of one or two, regarding crowded repasts as fit only for savages. "To dine in company with more than two is a Gaulish and a German thing. I can hardly bring myself to believe that I have eaten in concert with twenty; so barbarous and herdlike a practice does it now appear to me, such an incentive to drink much and talk loosely; not to add, such a necessity to speak loud; which is clownish and odious in the extreme." The speaker in the above passage is Lucullus, but the sentiments are Landor's own. Neither does Landor seem at any time to have taken trouble about his dress; having indeed in later life come to be conspicuously negligent in that particular. In these early Bath days we have to picture him to ourselves simply as a solid, massive, energetic presence, in society sometimes silent and abstracted, sometimes flaming with eloquence and indignation; his figure robust and commanding, but not tall, his face principally noticeable for its bold, full, blue-grey eyes and strong, high-arched brows, with dark hair falling over and half concealing the forehead, and a long, stubborn upper lip, and aggressive set of the jaw, betokening truly enough the passionate temper of the man, yet in conversation readily breaking up into the sunniest, most genial smile.

Such as he was, then, Landor was in high request for the time being in the assembly-rooms both of Bath and Clifton. These, no doubt, were the days in which, as he

wrote long afterwards to Lady Blessington, he suffered so much annoyance from his bad dancing. "How grievously has my heart ached," such is his large way of putting it, "when others were in the full enjoyment of that recreation which I had no right even to partake of." Nevertheless, Landor was kindly looked on by the fair, and only too impetuously ready to answer sigh with sigh. His flirtations were numerous and were carried far. There is even not wanting, in his dealings with and his language concerning women during this brief period, a touch of commonplace rakishness, a shadow of vulgarity nowhere else to be discerned in the ways of this most unvulgar of mankind. But such shadows were merely on the surface. Inwardly, Landor's letters show him ill content, and longing, if he only knew how to find it, for something high and steadfast in his life. He was given as much as ever to solid reading and reflection, and stirred in a moment to wholesome and manly sorrow at the loss of a friend or the breach of an old association. A Mrs. Lambe, whom he had warmly regarded from boyhood, died about this time at Warwick, and soon afterwards came the news of the sudden death in India of Rose Aylmer, the friend of Welsh days to whose casual loan Landor, as we saw, had been indebted for the first hint of *Gebir*. By both these losses Landor was deeply moved, by that of Rose Aylmer in especial his thoughts being for days and nights entirely possessed. During his vigils he wrote the first draft of the little elegy, "carved as it were in ivory or in gems," which in its later form became famous :—

> Ah, what avails the sceptred race?
> Ah, what the form divine?
> What every virtue, every grace?
> Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.

Just, natural, simple, severely and at the same time hauntingly melodious, however baldly or stoically they may strike the ear attuned to more high-pitched lamentations, these are the lines which made afterwards so deep an impression upon Charles Lamb. Tipsy or sober, it is reported of that impressionable spirit a few years before his death, he would always be repeating *Rose Aylmer*. The effect obtained by the iteration of the young girl's two beautiful names at the beginning of the fourth and fifth lines is an afterthought. In place of this simple, musical invocation, the fourth line had originally begun with a lame explanatory conjunction, "For, Aylmer," and the fifth with a commonplace adjective, "Sweet Aylmer." In the seventh line "memories" is a correction for the alliterative and vaguer "sorrows" of the first draft. Landor's affection for the same lost friend and companion is again expressed, we may remember, in another poem of a much later date headed *Abertawy*, which furnishes a good example of his ordinary manner, part playful, part serious, and not free from slips both of taste and workmanship, in this kind of autobiographical reminiscence, and which ends with the following gravely tender lines:—

Where is she now? Call'd far away
By one she dared not disobey,
To those proud halls, for youth unfit,
Where princes stand and judges sit.
Where Ganges rolls his widest wave
She dropt her blossom in the grave;
Her noble name she never changed,
Nor was her nobler heart estranged.

The losses above mentioned and others occurring in the circle of Landor's friends about this time, 1805—1806, prompted him to compose several pieces of the elegiac kind, both in English and Latin, which he collected and published under the title *Simonidea*. But these elegiac pieces did not stand alone. They were accompanied by others in right of which the volume might just as well have been called *Anacreontica*, namely a selection, made by Ianthè, of love-poems addressed in English to herself, besides some Latin verses of so free a tenour that Landor was by-and-by ashamed of having published them. "I printed whatever was marked with a pencil by a woman who loved me, and I consulted all her caprices. I added some Latin poetry of my own, more pure in its Latinity than its sentiment. When you read the *Simonidea*, pity and forgive me." Several of Landor's early writings are now excessively rare, more than one indeed being only known to exist in a solitary example; but of the *Simonidea*, so far as I have been able to ascertain, not even a single copy has been preserved.

Soon after this, moved, it would seem, partly by his strained finances, and partly by his sanguine imagination, Landor conceived the plan of alienating his paternal estate in Staffordshire, in order to acquire another yielding, or capable of being made to yield, larger returns in a wilder part of the country. He turned his thoughts first towards the lakes. Here he made a tour in the spring of 1807; found an estate which enchanted him, beside the small romantic Lake of Loweswater, and at once began negotiations for its purchase. These falling through, he in the next year pitched upon another and a very noble property, which was for sale in a country nearer to his own accustomed haunts, that, namely, of Llanthony on the Welsh

border. To his overwhelming desire to become lord of Llanthony all impediments had now to give way, with what consequences to himself and others we shall see.

But before the complicated arrangements connected with this purchase were completed, events of great interest in Landor's life had come to pass. First there was the beginning of his acquaintance with Southey. Of all English writers of that age, they were the two who most resembled each other by their science in the technical craft of letters, by their high and classical feeling for the honour and dignity of the English language, and by the comprehensiveness and solidity of their reading. Ever since Southey had discovered that Landor was the author of *Gebir*, and Landor that Southey was its admiring critic, a preconceived sympathy had sprung up between the two men. Since then Southey had written *Madoc*, the first, and *Thalaba*, the second, of his mythological epics, and in *Madoc* had avowedly profited by Landor's example, both as to the way of *seeing*, as he put it, for the purposes of poetry, and as to the management of his blank verse. On his tour in the lake country, Landor, who was no seeker of acquaintances, and indeed once boasted, in his serene way, that he had never accepted a letter of introduction in his life, had missed, and expressed his regret at missing, the opportunity of meeting Southey.

It was in Southey's native Bristol, at the lodgings of his friend Danvers, that he and Landor met for the first time in the spring of 1808. They took to each other at once, and a friendship was formed which lasted without break or abatement for thirty years. In many of their opinions Landor and Southey differed much already, and their differences were destined to increase as time went on, but differences of opinion brought no shadow between

them. Each seems instinctively to have recognized whatever was sterling, loyal, and magnanimous in the other's nature. Each, though this is a minor matter, heartily respected in the other the scrupulous and accomplished literary workman. Each probably liked and had a fellow-feeling for the other's boyish exuberance of vitality and proneness to exaggeration and denunciation. For it is to be noted that Landor's intimacies were almost always with men of emphatic and declamatory eloquence like his own. Parr, the most honoured friend of his youth, Southey and Francis Hare, the most cherished of his manhood, were all three Olympian talkers in their degree. But Landor and his kindred Olympians, it seems, understood each other, and knew how to thunder and lighten without collision. These last, as it happens, are the very words afterwards used by Southey in preparing a common friend for the kind of personage he would meet in Landor. "He does more than any of the gods of all my mythologies, for his very words are thunder and lightning, such is the power and splendour with which they burst out. But all is perfectly natural; there is no trick about him, no preaching, no playing off." If we thus have Southey's testimony at once to the impressiveness and to the integrity of Landor's personality, we have Landor's to "the genial voice and radiant eye" of Southey, besides a hundred other expressions of affection for his person and admiration for his character and his powers.

With the immediate result of his own and Landor's first conversation, Southey could not fail to be gratified. He had been forced of late to abandon his most cherished task, the continuance of his series of mythologic epics. The plain reason was that he could not afford to spend time on work so little remunerative. Landor, when

Southey told him this, was in an instant all generosity and delicacy, begging to be allowed to print future productions of the kind at his own expense,—"as many as you will write, and as many copies as you please." In all this there was not the least taint of patronage or condescension on the part of the magnificent young squire and scholar towards the struggling, although already distinguished, man of letters, his senior by only a year. Landor was as incapable of assuming superiority on any grounds but those of character and intellect as of enduring such assumption in others. Southey, as it turned out, only made practical use of his friend's offer to the extent of allowing him to buy a considerable number of copies of *Kehama* when that work appeared. But the encouragement was everything to him, and had for its consequence that *Kehama*, already begun and dropped, was industriously resumed and finished, and followed in due course by *Roderick*, the manuscript of either poem being dutifully sent off in successive instalments as it was written for Landor to read and criticise. At the same time an active and intimate correspondence sprung up between the two men, and in after-years supplied, indeed, the chief aliment of their friendship, their meetings being from the force of circumstances rare.

The next event in Landor's life was his sudden and brief appearance as a man of action on the theatre of European war. Napoleon Buonaparte had just carried into effect the infamous plot which he had conceived in order to make himself master of Spain and Portugal. But before his brother Joseph had time to be proclaimed king at Madrid, all Spain was up in arms. Against the French armies of occupation there sprang up from one end of the country to the other first a tumultuary and then an organ-

ized resistance. So swift, efficient, and unanimous a rising had nowhere else been witnessed. A people, it seemed, had at last been found with manhood enough in their veins to refuse the yoke of France, and in the hearts of all friends of liberty despair began to give way to hope. How much of anarchical self-seeking and distracted, pusillanimous intrigue in reality lay latent in these patriot bosoms, was little suspected in the enthusiasm of the hour. In England especially, the Spaniards were passionately acclaimed as a race of heroes, on whose victory depended the very salvation of the world. Instant help, both in men and money, was despatched to the insurgents by the English Government. Poets and orators extolled their deeds; volunteers pressed to join their standards. While Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, from the seclusion of their lakes and mountains, did their utmost to swell the tide of popular emotion, Landor on his part was not content with words. One evening at Brighton he found himself "preaching a crusade" to an audience of two Irish gentlemen, who caught his ardour, and the three determined to start for Spain without more ado. Early in August they set sail from Falmouth for Corunna, which was the seat of an English mission under Stuart, afterwards ambassador in Paris. From Corunna Landor addressed a letter to the provincial government, enclosing a gift of ten thousand reals for the relief of the inhabitants of Venturada, a town burnt by the French, and at the same time proclaiming that he would equip at his own cost, and accompany to the field, all volunteers up to the number of a thousand who might choose to join him. Both gift and proclamation were thankfully acknowledged; a body of volunteers was promptly organized; and Landor marched with them through Leon

and Gallicia to join the Spanish army under Blake in the mountains of Biscay. In the meantime his incurably jealous and inflammable spirit of pride, inflammable especially in contact with those in office or authority, had caught fire at a depreciatory phrase dropped by the English envoy, Stuart, at one of the meetings of the Junta. Stuart's expression had not really referred to Landor at all, but he chose to apply it to himself, and on his march accordingly indited and made public an indignant letter of remonstrance.

To the groundless disgust which Landor had thus conceived and vented at a fancied slight, was soon added that with which he was more reasonably inspired by the incompetence and sloth of the Spanish general, Blake. He remained with the army of the North for several idle weeks in the neighbourhood of Reÿnosa and Aguilar. He was very desirous of seeing Madrid, but denied himself the excursion for fear of missing a battle, which after all was never fought. It was not until after the end of September, when the convention between Sir Hew Dalrymple and Junot had been signed in Portugal, and when Blake's army broke up its quarters at Reÿnosa, that Landor, his band of volunteers having apparently melted away in the meanwhile, separated himself from the Spanish forces and returned suddenly to England. He narrowly escaped being taken prisoner in the endeavour to travel by way of Bilbao, which had then just been re-entered by the French under Ney. The thanks of the supreme Junta for his services were in course of time conveyed to him at home, together with the title and commission of an honorary colonel in the Spanish army.

Landor had departed leaving his countrymen in a frenzy of enthusiasm. He found them on his return in a

frenzy of indignation and disgust. The military compromise just effected in Portugal was denounced by popular clamour in terms of unmeasured fury; and not by popular clamour only. Men of letters and of thought are habitually too much given to declaiming at their ease against the delinquencies of men of action and affairs. The inevitable friction of practical politics generates heat enough already, and the office of the political thinker and critic should be to supply, not heat, but light. The difficulties which attend his own unmolested task, the task of seeking after and proclaiming salutary truths, should teach him to make allowance for the far more urgent difficulties which beset the politician, the man obliged, amid the clash of interests and temptations, to practise from hand to mouth, and at his peril, the most uncertain and at the same time the most indispensable of the experimental arts. The early years of this century in England may not have been years remarkable for wise or consistent statesmanship; they were certainly remarkable for the frantic vituperation of those in power by those who looked on. The writers of the Lake school were at this time as loud and as little reasonable in their outcries as any group of men in the kingdom, and Southey was the loudest of them all. His letters, and especially his letters to Landor, on the public questions of the hour, can hardly be read even now without a twinge of humiliation at the spectacle of a man of his knowledge, sincerity, and candour, giving way to so idle a fury of misjudgment and malediction. Landor on his part is moderate by comparison, and has a better hold both of facts and principles, although he is ready to go great lengths with his friend in condemnation of the English ministers and commanders.

In the succeeding winter and spring nothing but Spain was in men's minds or conversation. After the victory and death of Sir John Moore at Corunna in January, 1809, Landor was for a while on the point of sailing for that country as a volunteer for the second time. Eventually, however, he forbore, private affairs in connexion with his new property at Llanthony helping among other things to detain him. In order to effect this purchase Landor had required as much as 20,000*l.* over and above the sum realized by the sale of his Staffordshire estate. For this purpose he made up his mind to sell Tachbrook, the smaller of the two properties in Warwickshire destined to devolve to him at the death of his mother. Her consent was necessary to this step, as well as that of his brothers, and an act of parliament authorizing the breach of the entail. All these matters, together with some minor arrangements protecting the interests of Mrs. Landor and her other children by charges on the new estate, and the like, were got through in the summer of this year (1809). Early in the autumn of the same year we find Landor established in temporary quarters on his new property. It was a wild and striking country that he had chosen for his future home. Most readers are probably familiar with the distant aspect of those mountains whose sombre masses and sweeping outlines arrest the eye of the spectator looking westward over the Welsh marches from the summit of the Malvern hills. These are the Black or Hatterill mountains of Monmouthshire and Brecknockshire. Of all their recesses the most secluded and most romantic, although not the most remote, is the valley of Ewias, within which stands the ruined priory of Llanthony.[1] This valley

[1] Pronounce Llanthóny; said to be short for Llandevi Nanthodeni, *i.e.* church of St. David by the water of Hodeni. The

winds for some twelve miles between two high continuous ridges, of which the sides are now flowing and now precipitous, here broken into wooded dingles, here receding into grassy amphitheatres, and there heaped with the copse-grown ruins of ancient landslips. Along its bed there races or loiters according to the weather—and it is a climate notorious for rain—the stream Hodeni, Honddu, or Hondy. The opening of the valley is towards the south, and was blocked in ancient times with thickets and morasses, so that its only approach was over one or other of its lofty lateral ridges. In those days the scene was wont to lay upon the few who ever entered it the spell of solitude and penitential awe. It was said that St. David had for a time dwelt here as a hermit. In the reign of William Rufus a certain knight having found his way into the valley during the chase, the call fell upon him to do the like; the fame of his conversion reached the court; he was joined by a second seeker after the holy life, then by others; gifts and wealth poured in upon them; they were enrolled as a brotherhood of the order of St. Augustine, and built themselves a priory in the midst of the valley, on a level field half a furlong above the stream. Its ruins are still standing dark and venerable amid the verdure of the valley, a rambling assemblage of truncated towers, disroofed presbytery, shattered aisles, and modernized outbuildings. The remains of the prior's lodgings, together with that one of the two western towers to which they are contiguous, are fitted up, the ancient

early history of this famous border priory is better known than that of almost any other foundation of the same kind; see the articles of Mr. Roberts in *Archæologia Cambrensis*, vol. i., No. 3, and of Mr. Freeman, *ibid.*, 3rd series, vol. i.; also a sketch by the present writer in the *Portfolio*, Jan. 1881, from which last two or three sentences are repeated in the text.

sanctities all forgotten, as a bailiff's house and inn. The avocations of dairy, scullery, and larder are carried on beneath the shelter of the other tower, while the wild rose and snapdragon wave from the crevices overhead, and the pigeons flit and nestle among the shaftless openings.

Such as Llanthony Priory is now, such, making allowance for some partial dilapidations which neither he nor his successors took enough care to prevent, it in all essentials was when Landor took it over from its former owner in the spring of 1809, and along with it the fine estate to which it gives its name. The property is some eight miles long, and includes for that distance the whole sweep of the vale of Ewias. The valley farms contain rich pasturage and fairly productive corn-lands, while the eastern ridge is covered with grass, and the western with richly heathered moor. The moors yield tolerable shooting, and the Hondy is famous for its trout. But it was not for the sake of shooting or fishing that Landor came to Llanthony. He was, indeed, devoted to animals, but not in the ordinary English sense of being devoted to the pastime of killing them. One of the points by which observers used afterwards to be most struck in Landor was the infinite affection and mutual confidence which subsisted between him and his pets of the dumb creation, both dogs and others, with whom the serenity of his relations used to remain perfectly undisturbed throughout his most explosive demonstrations against the delinquencies of his own species. But his sympathies for animals were not confined to pets. In early days he had plied both gun and rod, but by this time or soon afterwards he seems to have quite given them up. Even in youth he had suffered acute remorse on one day finding a partridge, which he had bagged over night and supposed

dead, still alive in the morning. Cruelty was for him the chief, "if not indeed," as he once put it, "the only," sin, and cruelty to animals was at least as bad as cruelty to men. Angling in later life he once wrote of as "that sin." In a letter to his sister he writes more tolerantly, and with a touch of his peculiar charm, of field sports in general:—"Let men do these things if they will. Perhaps there is no harm in it; perhaps it makes them no crueller than they would be otherwise. But it is hard to take away what we cannot give, and life is a pleasant thing—at least to birds. No doubt the young ones say tender things to one another, and even the old ones do not dream of death."

If Landor was thus little of a sportsman, there was another province of a country gentleman's pursuits into which he could enter with all his heart, and that was planting. He loved trees as he loved flowers, not with any scientific or practical knowledge, but with a poet's keenness of perception, heightened by a peculiar vein of reflective and imaginative association. He could not bear either the unnecessary plucking of the one or felling of the other. "Ah," he represents himself in one of his dialogues as exclaiming at the sight of two fallen pines in Lombardy,—

> . . . Ah, Don Pepino! old trees in their living state are the only things that money cannot command. Rivers leave their beds, run into cities and traverse mountains for it; obelisks and arches, palaces and temples, amphitheatres and pyramids, rise up like exhalations at its bidding; even the free spirit of Man, the only thing great on earth, crouches and cowers in its presence. It passes away and vanishes before venerable trees. What a sweet odour is here! whence comes it? sweeter it appears to me and stronger than the pine itself.

The interlocutor, Don Pepino, explains that the odour proceeds from a neighbouring linden, and that the linden, a very old and large one, is doomed; whereupon Landor,—

O Don Pepino! the French, who abhor whatever is old and whatever is great, have spared it; the Austrians, who sell their fortresses and their armies, nay, sometimes their daughters, have not sold it: must it fall? . . .

How many fond and how many lively thoughts have been nurtured under this tree! how many kind hearts have beaten here! Its branches are not so numerous as the couples they have invited to sit beside it, nor its blossoms and leaves as the expressions of tenderness it has witnessed. What appeals to the pure all-seeing heavens! what similitudes to the everlasting mountains! what protestations of eternal truth and constancy from those who now are earth; they, and their shrouds, and their coffins!

The passage in which Landor has best expressed his feeling about flowers is one of verse, and one of the few in his writings which are well known, though not so well as by its unmatched delicacy and grave, unobtrusive sweetness it deserves.

When hath wind or rain
Borne hard upon weak plants that wanted me,
And I (however they might bluster round)
Walkt off? 'Twere most ungrateful: for sweet scents
Are the swift vehicles of still sweeter thoughts,
And nurse and pillow the dull memory
That would let drop without them her best stores.
They bring me tales of youth and tones of love,
And 'tis and ever was my wish and way
To let all flowers live freely, and all die
(Whene'er their Genius bids their souls depart)
Among their kindred in their native place.
I never pluck the rose; the violet's head
Hath shaken with my breath upon its bank
And not reproacht it; the ever-sacred cup
Of the pure lily hath between my hands
Felt safe, unsoil'd, nor lost one grain of gold.

"I love these beautiful and peaceful tribes," Landor says elsewhere, with special reference to the flowers of Llanthony; "they always meet one in the same place at the same season; and years have no more effect on their placid countenances than on so many of the most favoured gods." Such are the exquisite tendernesses of feeling and imagination which go together in Landor with his masterful energy and strength.

With these tastes and predilections, then, and in his lordly, imaginative, sanguinely unpractical manner, Landor entered upon his new career as the beneficent landowner of a neglected and backward neighbourhood. He would have the priory restored, and for that purpose portions of the existing ruins were taken down, and their stones carefully numbered. He would raise a new mansion for himself and his heirs, and he set the builders to work accordingly upon a site a quarter of a mile above the ruins. Communications in the district were by rough bridle-paths and fords, and Landor set gangs of men about the construction of roads and bridges. Agriculture was miserably primitive; he imported sheep from Segovia, and applied to Southey and other friends for tenants who should introduce and teach improved methods of cultivation. The inhabitants were drunken, impoverished, and morose; he was bent upon reclaiming and civilizing them The woods had suffered from neglect or malice; he would clothe the sides of the valley with cedars of Lebanon. With that object he bought two thousand cones, calculated to yield a hundred seeds each, intending to do ten times as much afterwards, and exulting in the thought of the two million cedar-trees which he would thus leave for the shelter and the delight of posterity.

While all these great operations were in progress,

Landor was not a permanent resident, but only a frequent visitor, on his estate, inhabiting for a few weeks at a time the rooms in the church tower, and living in the intervals principally at Bath. Here, in the early spring of 1811, he met a young lady at a ball, and as soon as he had set eyes on her exclaimed, in the true Landorian manner, "By heaven! that's the nicest girl in the room, and I'll marry her." And marry her he did; the adventure quickly ending in that irreversible manner, instead of, as others as rashly begun had ended, in protestations, misunderstandings, and retreat. Mr. Forster appositely contrasts Landor's reckless action with his weighty and magnificent words concerning marriage:—"Death itself to the reflecting mind is less serious than marriage. The elder plant is cut down that the younger may have room to flourish: a few tears drop into the loosened soil, and buds and blossoms spring over it. Death is not even a blow, is not even a pulsation; it is a pause. But marriage unrolls the awful lot of numberless generations. Health, Genius, Honour, are the words inscribed on some; on others are Disease, Fatuity, and Infamy." But it was Landor's fate to be thus wise only for others; wise on paper; wise after the event; wise, in a word, in every and any manner except such as could conduce to his own welfare. His marriage was not a happy one. His bride, Julia Thuillier, was the portionless daughter of an unprosperous banker at Banbury, said to be descended from an old Swiss family. Landor, with his moods of lofty absence and pre-occupation, and with the tumultuous and disconcerting nature, sometimes, of his descents into the region of reality, must at best have been a trying companion to live with. Nevertheless it would seem as though a woman capable of sharing his thoughts, and of

managing him in his fits of passion, as his wiser friends were accustomed to manage him in later years, by yielding to the storm at first, until his own sense of humour would be aroused and it would disperse itself in peals of laughter, might have had an enviable, if not an easy, life with one so great-minded and so fundamentally kind and courteous. Mrs. Landor seems to have had none of the gifts of the domestic artist; she was not one of those fine spirits who study to create, out of the circumstances and characters with which they have to deal, the best attainable ideal of a home; but a commonplace provincial beauty enough, although lively and agreeable in her way. "God forbid," in conversation once growled Landor, who was habitually reticent on his private troubles, "that I should do otherwise than declare that she always *was* agreeable—to every one but *me*." She was sixteen years or more younger than her husband, a fact of which, when differences occurred, she seems to have been not slow to remind him; and there is impartial evidence to show that, in some at least of the disputes which led to breaches more or less permanent between them, the immediately offending tongue was not the husband's, but the wife's. He himself once breaks out, in commenting on Milton's line,

> Because thou hast hearken'd to the voice of thy wife,

"there are very few who have not done this, *bon gré, mal gré;* and many have thought it curse enough of itself." These matters, however, belong to a later point of our narrative. At first the little wife, with her golden hair, her smiles, and her spirits, seems to have done very well. She accompanied Landor on his visits to Llanthony, where they received as guests, at first in the tower rooms of the priory, and later in some that had been got habitable in

the new house, several members of his family and friends. The Southeys, to Landor's great delight, were his first visitors, coming in the summer of 1811, within a few months of his marriage. Later came his sisters, and later again, his mother.

But neither the care of his estate nor his marriage had the least interrupted the habitual occupations of Landor's mind. What he really most valued in a beautiful country was the fit and inspiring theatre which it afforded for his meditations. Whether in town or country he reflected and composed habitually out walking, and therefore preferred at all times to walk alone. There were half-hours, he represents himself as saying to Southey, when, although in good humour and good spirits, we would on no consideration be disturbed by the necessity of talking. "In this interval there is neither storm nor sunshine of the mind, but calm and (as the farmers call it) *growing* weather, in which the blades of thought spring up and dilate insensibly. Whatever I do I must do in the open air, or in the silence of night; either is sufficient; but I prefer the hours of exercise, or, what is next to exercise, of field-repose." In these years Landor was composing much. In 1810 he printed a couple of Latin odes, *Ad Gustavum Regem*, *Ad Gustavum exsulem*, and began the first of his *Idyllia Heroica* in that language, on the touching story of the priest Coresus, his love and sacrifice. He also grappled for the first time with English tragedy. His choice of subject was dictated by his own and the general interest in and enthusiasm for Spain. He fixed on that romantic and semi-mythical episode of early Spanish history, the alliance of the heroic Count Julian with the invading Moors, of whom he had been formerly the scourge, against his own people and their King Roderick, in order

to avenge the outrage which Roderick had done to his daughter. The same subject was in various forms occupying both Southey and Scott about the same time; Southey in his epic of *Roderick*, called in the first draft *Pelayo* and sent in instalments as it was written to Landor; and Scott in his *Vision of Don Roderick*. Landor had begun his tragedy, as it happened, at the same time as Southey his epic, in the late summer of 1810, and he finished it early the next spring. His tragedy and his engagement are amusingly mixed up in a letter written to Southey in April, and ending "Adieu, and congratulate me. I forgot to say that I have added thirty-five verses to Scene 2 of Act III."

Landor's theory was that the passions should in poetry, and especially in tragedy, be represented, "naked, like the heroes and the Gods." In realizing the high and desperate passions of Roderick and Julian, the offender and the avenger, he has girded himself for rivalry with whatever is austere, haughty, pregnant, and concise in the works of the masters whom he most admired for those qualities. But in raising his characters up to this ideal height, in seeking to delineate their passions in forms of this heroic energy and condensation, this "nakedness," to use his own word, Landor has not, I think, succeeded in keeping them human. Human to himself during the process of their creation they unquestionably were; "I brought before me," he writes, "the various characters, the very tones of their voices, their forms, complexions, and step. In the daytime I laboured, and at night unburdened my mind, shedding many tears." Nevertheless they do not live in like manner for the reader. The conception of Count Julian, desperately loving both his dishonoured daughter and the country against which he has turned in

order to chastise her dishonourer; inexorably bent on a vengeance the infliction of which costs him all the while the direst agony and remorse; is certainly grandiose and terrible enough. But even this conception does not seem to be realized, except at moments, in a manner to justify the enthusiastic praise bestowed upon it by De Quincey, in his erratic, fragmentary, and otherwise grudging notes on Landor. Still less are we livingly impressed by the vanquished, remorseful, still defiant and intriguing Roderick, the injured and distracted Egilona, the dutiful and outraged Covilla, her lover Sisabert, or the vindictive and suspicious Moorish leader Muza. These and the other characters are made to declare themselves by means of utterances often admirably energetic, and of images sometimes magnificently daring; yet they fail to convince or carry us away. This effect is partly due, no doubt, to defect of dramatic construction. The scenes of the play succeed each other by no process of organic sequence or evolution, a fact admitted by Landor himself when he afterwards called it a series of dialogues rather than a drama. Some of them are themselves dramatically sterile, tedious, and confusing. Others, and isolated lines and sayings in almost all, are written, if not with convincing felicity, at any rate with overmastering force. On the whole, we shall be more inclined to agree with Lamb's impression of *Count Julian* than with De Quincey's. "I must read again Landor's *Julian*," writes Lamb in 1815. "I have not read it for some time. I think he must have failed in Roderick, for I remember nothing of him, nor of any distinct character as a character—only fine sounding passages." The reader may perhaps judge of the quality of the work by the following fragment, exhibiting at its highest point of tension the struggle between the enemies

Roderick and Julian after Roderick has fallen into Julian's power.

Julian. Could I speak patiently who speak to thee,
I would say more . . . part of thy punishment
It should be, to be taught.
Roderigo. Reserve thy wisdom
Until thy patience come, its best ally.
I learn no lore, of peace or war, from thee.
Julian. No, thou shalt study soon another tongue,
And suns more ardent shall mature thy mind.
Either the cross thou bearest, and thy knees
Among the silent caves of Palestine
Wear the sharp flints away with midnight prayer;
Or thou shalt keep the fasts of Barbary,
Shalt wait amid the crowds that throng the well
From sultry noon till the skies fade again,
To draw up water and to bring it home
In the crackt gourd of some vile testy knave,
Who spurns thee back with bastinadoed foot
For ignorance or delay of his command.
Roderigo. Rather the poison or the bowstring.
Julian. Slaves
To other's passions die such deaths as those:
Slaves to their own should die—
Roderigo. What worse?
Julian. Their own.
Roderigo. Is this thy counsel, renegade?
Julian. Not mine;
I point a better path, nay, force thee on.
I shelter thee from every brave man's sword
While I am near thee: I bestow on thee
Life: if thou die, 'tis when thou sojournest
Protected by this arm and voice no more;
'Tis slavishly, 'tis ignominiously,
'Tis by a villain's knife.
Roderigo. By whose?
Julian. Roderigo's.

Landor's severe method does not admit much scenic or accessory ornament in a work of this kind, but he has

made a vivid and pleasant use of his own recent Spanish experiences in the passage where Julian speaks to his daughter of the retreats where she may hide her shame:—

> Wide are the regions of our far-famed land;
> Thou shalt arrive at her remotest bounds,
> See her best people, choose some holiest house;
> Whether where Castro from surrounding vines
> Hears the hoarse ocean roar among his caves,
> And through the fissure in the green churchyard
> The wind wail loud the calmest summer day;
> Or where Santona leans against the hill,
> Hidden from sea and land by groves and bowers.

And again,—

> If strength be wanted for security,
> Mountains the guard, forbidding all approach
> With iron-pointed and uplifted gates,
> Thou wilt be welcome too in Aguilar,
> Impenetrable, marble-turreted,
> Surveying from aloft the limpid ford,
> The massive fane, the sylvan avenue;
> Whose hospitality I proved myself,
> A willing leader in no impious war
> When fame and freedom urged me; or mayst dwell
> In Reÿnosas' dry and thriftless dale,
> Unharvested beneath October moons,
> Among those frank and cordial villagers.

For the rest, *Count Julian* is not poor in solid and profound reflexions upon life, carved, polished, and compressed in the manner which was Landor's alone, as thus,

> Wretched is he a woman hath forgiven;
> With her forgiveness ne'er hath love return'd,

or thus,

> Of all who pass us in life's drear descent
> We grieve the most for those who *wisht* to die.

During the composition of *Count Julian* Landor had

been in close correspondence with Southey, and had submitted to him the manuscript as it progressed. He had at one moment entertained the obviously impracticable idea of getting his tragedy put on the stage by Kemble. This abandoned, he offered it to Longmans for publication. They declined to print it either at their own costs, or even, when he proposed that method, at the author's. Whereupon Landor writes to Southey: "We have lately had cold weather here, and fires. On receiving the last letter of Mr. Longman I committed to the flames my tragedy of *Ferranti and Giulio*, with which I intended to surprise you, and am resolved that never verse of mine shall be hereafter committed to anything else. My literary career has been a very curious one. You cannot imagine how I feel relieved at laying down its burden, and abandoning its tissue of humiliations. I fancied I had at last acquired the right tone of tragedy, and was treading down at heel the shoes of Alfieri." The resolution recorded with this composed and irrevocable air lasted no longer than the choler which had provoked it; and though the play of *Ferranti and Giulio*, all but a few fragments, had been irretrievably sacrificed, we find *Count Julian* within a few months offered to and accepted by Mr. Murray, on the introduction of Southey, and actually published at the beginning of 1812.

The same house brought out in the same year another production of Landor's of a totally different character, namely, a *Commentary on Memoirs of Mr. Fox*. In the biography of Landor this volume is of peculiar interest. It contains his views on men, books, and governments, set forth in the manner that was most natural to him, that is miscellaneously and without sequence, in a prose which has none of the inequalities nor opacities of his

verse, but is at once condensed and lucid, weighty without emphasis, and stately without effort or inflation. The fulness of Landor's mind, the clearness and confidence of his decisions, the mixed dogmatism and urbanity of his manner, are nowhere more characteristically displayed. The text for his deliverances is furnished by Trotter's *Memoirs of Fox*, then lately published. His motives in writing are declared in the following words:—"I would represent his (Fox's) actions to his contemporaries as I believe they will appear to posterity. I would destroy the impression of the book before me, because I am firmly persuaded that its tendency would be pernicious. The author is an amiable man, so was the subject of his memoir. But of all the statesmen who have been conversant in the management of our affairs, during a reign the most disastrous in our annals, the example of Mr. Fox if followed up would be the most fatal to our interests and glory." Elsewhere he speaks of the sacrifices made during the preparation of the book to appease the scruples of its publisher. We know from his letters that one of his schemes in those days was to render himself and other lovers of free speech independent of the publishers, by establishing a printing press of his own at Llanthony, "at a cost of 5000*l.*," and "for the purpose, at much private loss, disquiet, and danger, of setting the public mind more erect, and throwing the two factions into the dust." The *Commentary* as actually printed contains, first, a dedicatory address to the President of the United States, deprecating the war then imminent, in consequence of the fiscal policy of Canning, between them and the mother country. In the course of this dedication we find Landor putting forward for the first time one of the fundamental articles of his creed, in the shape of the following classification of animated beings:—

Consider, sir, what are the two nations, if I must call them two, which are about, not to terminate, but to extend their animosities by acts of violence and slaughter. If you think as I do, and free men, allowing for the degree of their capacities, generally think alike, you will divide the creatures of the Almighty into three parts; first, men who enjoy the highest perfection of liberty and civilization; secondly, men who live under the despotism of one person or more, and are not permitted to enjoy their reason for the promotion of their happiness; and thirdly, the brute creation, which is subject also to arbitrary will, and whose happiness their slender powers of reasoning (for some they have) is inadequate to promote. These three classes, in my view of the subject, stand at equal distances.

After the dedication follows a preface full of measured invective against those responsible for the political and military affairs of England, varied by observations on the character of the French and of their ruler, for the character of which see above (p. 34), and by the following fine oratorical outburst, a little less accurately wrought and balanced than it would have been in Landor's later prose, in which the stringency of the penal laws against the poor is contrasted with the lenient treatment of a State delinquent like Lord Melville, long Lord Privy Seal for Scotland and President of the Board of Control for India:—

If an unfortunate mother at a distance from home, carrying with her a half-starved infant, along roads covered with snow, should snatch a shirt from a hedge to protect it from a miserable death, she is condemned to die. That she never could have known the law, that she never could have assented to its equity, avails her nothing; that she was pierced by the cries of her own offspring; that it was not merely the instigation of want, but the force of omnipotent nature, the very voice of God himself, the preservation of a human being, of her own, the cause of her wanderings and her wretchedness, of her

captivity and her chains: what are these in opposition to an act of parliament? she dies. Look on the other side. A nobleman of most acute judgment, well versed in all the usages of his country, rich, powerful, commanding, with a sway more absolute and unresisted than any of its ancient monarchs, the whole kingdom in which he was a subject, with all its boroughs, and its shires and its courts and its universities, and in addition, as merely a fief, the empire of all India; who possessed more lucrative patronage than all the crowned heads in Europe; let this illustrious character, to whom so many men of rank looked up as their protector, and whom senators and statesmen acknowledged as their guide; let this distinguished member of the British parliament break suddenly through the law which he himself had brought into the House for the conservation of our property, without necessity, without urgency, without temptation--and behold the consequence.

The consequence is somewhat flat; and omitting Landor's account of Melville's acquittal and careless bearing, we may remember that the most weighty and pointed of all his epigrams in verse is that which he directed against the same delinquent:—

> God's laws declare
> Thou shalt not swear
> By aught in heaven above or earth below.
> "Upon my honour!" Melville cries.
> He swears, and lies.
> Does Melville then break God's commandment? No.

Landor's preface further contains reflections on the utility and the lessons of history for statesmen, and on their neglect by Pitt and Fox; and ends with the expression of a wish for the continuance of the present ministry in office, and an urgent plea in favour of Catholic emancipation. In the body of his book he takes extracts from Trotter's *Memoirs* as they come, and appends to each his own

reflexions. Literature and politics, personal topics and general, succeed each other promiscuously. Here is what Landor has to say of Burke and his policy during the French revolution:—"Burke, the only member of Parliament whose views were extensive, and whose reading was all turned to practical account, was more violent than even Lord Grenville for a declaration of hostilities. His unrivalled eloquence was fatal to our glory; it silenced our renown for justice and for wisdom, undermined our internal prosperity, and invaded our domestic peace." Then follows a long disparaging criticism of Spenser, whose poetry always seemed to Landor fantastic, unreal, and somewhat wearisome; then a comparative note on Chaucer and Burns; and then, after discursive criticisms on the creations of Caliban and Cyclops, on Addison, and on the Spenserian stanza, comes a conclusion of Ciceronian gravity and grace. "It is better to leave off where reflexion may rest than where passion may be excited; and it is soothing to take the last view of politics from among the works of the imagination. . . . An escape in this manner from the mazes of politics and the discord of party, leaves such sensations on the heart as are experienced by the disinterested and sober man, after some public meeting, when he has quitted the crowded and noisy room, the crooked and narrow streets, the hisses and huzzas of the rabble, poor and rich, and enters his own grounds again, and meets his own family at the gate." Immediately after which Landor turns round again to the charge in a final, denunciatory postscript. This remarkable outpouring of an authoritative, versatile, and richly stored mind was destined to have no influence and few readers. Like the *Simonidea*, though in deference to a different order of susceptibilities, it

seems to have been recalled almost as soon as it was published, and the only copy known to exist is one formerly in the possession of Southey, and now in that of Lord Houghton.

Besides his two tragedies, *Count Julian* and the lost *Ferranti and Giulio*, Landor wrote, during the latter part of this Llanthony period, a comedy called the *Charitable Dowager*, the proceeds of which he destined for the relief of an old acquaintance in Spain, for whose hospitality he had good reason to be grateful when he found himself prevented from entering Bilbao. The piece was, however, neither produced nor even printed, and considering the quality of Landor's later efforts in the comic vein, its loss is probably not to be regretted. Landor had in these days been also at work at what he in his heart cared for most of all, his *Idyllia* and other poems in Latin; which Valpy, he writes, "the greatest of all coxcombs," very much wished to publish, but which he preferred to print on his own account at Oxford, the proceeds, if any, to be distributed among the distressed poor of Leipzig.

This was towards the close of 1813. In the meantime Landor's magnificent projects as a landlord had been crumbling under his hands. Less than four years had brought his affairs to such a pass as utterly to disgust him with Llanthony, Wales, and the Welsh. There was scarcely one of his undertakings but had proved abortive. There was scarcely a public authority of his district against whom he had not a grievance, or a neighbour, high or low, with whom he had not come into collision, or a tenant or labourer on his estate who had not turned against him. The origin of these troubles sprang almost always either from Landor's headlong generosity, or else from his impracticable punctiliousness. He had a genius

for the injudicious virtues, and those which recoil against their possessor. Of his besetting faults, pride and anger, pride constantly assured him that he was not as other men, anger as constantly resented the behaviour of other men when it fell below the standard of his own. He would insist on expecting ancient Roman principles in all with whom he came in contact, and when he was undeceived would flame into Rhadamanthine rage against the culprit, idealising peccadilloes into enormities, and denouncing and seeking to have them chastised accordingly. Thus he made bad worse, and by his lofty, impetuous, unwise ways, turned the whole country-side into a hostile camp. It is true that luck and the characters of those with whom he had to deal were much against him. His first disenchantments arose in the course of communications with men in authority. He wrote to the bishop of his diocese, asking permission to restore for service a part of Llanthony priory. His first letter received no answer. He repeated his request in a second, in the course of which he remarked, "God alone is great enough for me to ask anything of twice;" to which there came an answer coldly sanctioning his proposal, but saying that an act of parliament would be required before it could be carried out; whereupon Landor, who had lately had enough of acts of parliament, allowed the matter to drop. At the Monmouthshire assizes in 1812 he was on the grand jury. The members of that body having been in the usual formal terms adjured by the judge to lay before him whatever evidences they possessed of felony committed in the county, what must our noble Roman do but take the adjuration literally, and in defiance of all usage deliver with his own hand to the judge a written accusation of felony against an influential rascal of the neighbourhood,

an attorney and surveyor of taxes; coupled with a complaint against his brother jurors for neglect of duty in refusing to inquire into the case. The judge took no notice of the communication, and Landor, having naturally gained nothing by his action except the resentful or contemptuous shrugs of his fellow-jurors, closed the incident with a second letter of polite sarcasm, in which he wrote, "I acknowledge my error, and must atone for my presumption. But I really thought your lordship was in earnest, seeing you, as I did, in the robes of justice, and hearing you speak in the name and with the authority of the laws." About the same time, partly on the suggestion of the one or two gentlemen of the neighbourhood who had culture and character enough to be his friends, Landor applied to the Duke of Beaufort, the lord lieutenant, to be put on the commission of the peace of the county. There was no resident magistrate within ten miles of Llanthony, and yet his application was refused. Partly his politics, partly the fact that a brother of the Duke's had been foreman of the grand jury at the recent assize, explain the refusal. Landor thereupon wrote a temperate letter to the Lord Chancellor (Eldon), pointing out the necessity of a magistrate being appointed for his neighbourhood; and when he received no answer, followed it up by another, haughtier, but not less calm and measured, in which he describes his qualifications and his pursuits, and contrasts them in a strain of grave irony with those usually thought sufficient for a public servant: "I never now will accept, my lord, anything whatever that can be given by ministers or by chancellors, not even the dignity of a county justice, the only honour or office I ever have solicited."

Landor's worst troubles at Llanthony did not, however, proceed from men in high station, but from his own tenants

and labourers. He found the Welsh peasantry churlish, malicious, and unimprovable. "If drunkenness, idleness, mischief, and revenge are the principal characteristics of the savage state, what nation—I will not say in Europe, but in the world—is so singularly tattooed with them as the Welsh?" And again, "The earth contains no race of human beings so totally vile and worthless as the Welsh." The French themselves seemed no longer odious in comparison. Their government Landor had come to regard as at any rate more efficient and better administered than ours; and after three years' experience of the ingratitude, thriftlessness, and lawlessness of the people round about him, we find him already half determined to go and make his home in France. But things would probably never have really come to that pass had it not been for the malpractices of an English tenant, to whom Landor had looked most of all for the improvement of his property. This was one Betham, whose family was known, and one of his sisters highly esteemed, by both Lamb and Southey. Betham had used Southey's name to introduce himself to Landor as a tenant, and had been accepted, he and his family, with open arms in consequence. Landor rented him first one and then another of his best farms on terms of reckless liberality, although he knew nothing of agriculture, and his previous career had been that, first of an usher in a school, and then of a petty officer on board an East India Company's ship. He is the same whom Lamb had in his mind when, years afterwards, he wrote to Landor, "I knew all your Welsh annoyancers, the measureless B.'s. I knew a quarter of a mile of them. Seventeen brothers and sixteen sisters, as they appear to me in memory. There was one of them that used to fix his long legs on my fender and tell a story of a shark,

every night, endless, immortal. How have I grudged the salt-sea ravener not having had his gorge of him." This unconscionable tenant not only did nothing for the land, but misconducted himself scandalously, holding open house for his brothers and his sisters, his father and his father's friends, associating in the ale-houses with the scum of the neighbourhood, neglecting, and by-and-by refusing, to pay his rent, and when at last Landor lost patience, leaguing himself with other defaulting tenants, and with every malicious attorney and every thievish idler in the country side, to make his landlord's existence intolerable. Landor's rents were withheld, his game poached, his plantations damaged, his timber stolen, his character maligned, and even his life threatened. He was like a lion baited by curs. He was plunged up to the neck in law-suits. In the actions and counter-actions that were coming up for trial continually between himself and his tenants and neighbours, the local courts and juries were generally adverse to him, the local attorneys insolent. One of these on some unusual provocation Landor beat. "I treated him as he deserved. He brought a criminal action against me." In the case of a London counsel employed against him, Mr. (afterwards Judge) Taunton, Landor adopted a more innocuous, if to himself at least as gratifying, mode of revenge. "I would not encounter the rudeness I experienced from this Taunton, to save all the property I possess. I have, however, chastised him in my Latin verses now in the press." With reference to the criminal action pending on the part of the other and physically smarting man of law, he writes, "I shall be cited to take my trial at Monmouth; and as I certainly shall not appear I shall be outlawed." In the meantime, his prin-

cipal suit, for the recovery of nearly two thousand pounds due from Betham, had been successful, and his claim had been allowed by the Court of Exchequer to the last farthing. But it was too late. Ruin stared him in the face. He had sunk over seventy thousand pounds upon the Llanthony property in five years, and he had no ready money to meet the interest due on a mortgage. There were other equally urgent claims. The pressure of these, together with the probable results of his resolution not to appear to answer the charge against him at Monmouth, determined him, in May, 1814, to retreat to the Continent. His personal property, both in Wales and at Bath, was sold. The estate of Llanthony was taken by arrangement out of his hands, and vested in those of trustees. The life-charge in favour of his mother entitled her, fortunately, to the position of first creditor. She had an excellent talent for business, as had one at least of her younger sons, and Llanthony, under the management of its new trustees, soon proved able to yield a handsome enough provision for Landor's maintenance after all charges upon it had been satisfied. His half-built mansion was pulled down, and its remains only exist to-day in the guise of a hay-shed; while in the adjoining dingle the stream is all but dried up, and silent, as if its Naiad had fled with her master, while all the rest are vocal. The property still belongs to Landor's surviving son. His roads, and a good part of his plantations, still exist to bear witness to the energy of his years of occupation, and the beautiful Welsh valley will be for ever associated with his fame.

Landor sent to Southey from Weymouth on the 27th of May, 1814, a letter dejected and almost desperate, although written with his unfailing dignity of manner, in

which he speaks of his future as follows: "I go to-morrow to St. Malo. In what part of France I shall end my days I know not; but there I shall end them, and God grant that I may end them speedily, and so as to leave as little sorrow as possible to my friends. . . . . My wife follows when I have found a place fit for her reception. Adieu." But the cup of Landor's bitterness was not yet full. He sailed, in fact, not to St. Malo, but to Jersey, and was there joined by his wife and her young sister. Mrs. Landor disliked the plan of going to live in France, while Landor, on his part, was absolutely bent upon it. He desired that the question of changing their destination might not again be raised. She would not suffer the question to drop. Arguing one evening with more than usual petulance, she taunted him before her sister with their disparity of years. His pride took sudden fire; he rose at four the next morning, crossed the island on foot, and before noon was under weigh for the coast of France, in an oyster-boat, alone.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE AT TOURS—COMO—PISA—IDYLLIA HEROICA.

(1814—1821.)

Up to the date which we have now reached Landor's career seems to present a spectacle of almost as much futility as force. His resplendent gifts and lofty purposes had been attended with little solid result either in the practical or in the intellectual sphere. In the practical part of life he had indeed thus far conspicuously failed. The existence which he had realized for himself was one in which almost all his ideals were reversed. Bent upon walking in the paths of serenity, he had nevertheless trodden those of contention. Proudly exacting in his standard of intercourse and behaviour, he had been involved in ignominious wranglings with the base. Born to wealth, and eager to employ it for the public good, he had reaped nothing but frustration and embarrassment. Tenderly chivalrous towards women, he had just turned his back in anger upon his young wife. Neither in the other sphere of man's activity, the intellectual and imaginative sphere, which to him was in truth the more real and engrossing of the two, had Landor as yet done himself anything like full justice. Posterity, if his career had ended here, would probably have ignored his writings, or have remembered them at most as the fragmentary and imperfect pro-

ducts of a powerful spirit that had passed away without having left any adequate memorial. Several years had still to elapse before Landor addressed himself to that which was destined to be his great and vital task in literature, the writing of the *Imaginary Conversations.* His life until then continued to be unsettled, and his efforts uncertainly directed.

He was not long in recovering from the effect of the misfortunes narrated in the last chapter. The relief of Latin verses came to the aid of his natural elasticity; and at Tours, whither he made his way from the coast of Brittany, we find him within a week or two busy upon the composition of a mythologic poem in that language, *Ulysses in Argiripa,* in the course of which the personages of some of his Welsh tormentors—Betham and his sister, and an Abergavenny attorney named Gabell—are ingeniously introduced and pilloried.[1] Of his quarrel with his wife he writes perfectly like a gentleman, doing justice to her contentment and moderation during the trying experiences of their life at Llanthony, proposing to hand over to her all his remaining fortune, reserving only 160*l.* a year for himself; but adding that every kind and tender sentiment towards her is rooted up from his heart for ever. When, however, he hears after a while that she has suffered no less than himself, and been very ill since their dispute, the news banishes all traces of resentment from his mind, and he writes at once "to comfort and console her." The result was for the time being a full reconciliation; and early in 1815 Mrs Landor joined her husband at Tours. In the intervening months he had been living there alone, busying himself with his reading and his Latin verses; buying his own provisions in the market, and making himself

[1] *Ulysses in Argiripa,* lib. iii., vv. 197—209.

infinitely popular among the market-women by his genial, polite ways; on the best of terms also, strange to say, with the prefect; and occasionally receiving the visit of some choicer spirit among the English residents or tourists. It was there that he made the acquaintance, among others, of Francis Hare, an acquaintance destined to ripen into a friendship which proved one of the closest and most fruitful of Landor's life. Hare brought to see him at this time Mr., afterwards Sir Roderick, Murchison, in addressing whom in his old age Landor thus pleasantly recalls the circumstances:—

> Upon the bank
> Of Loire thou camest to me, brought by Hare,
> The witty and warm-hearted, passing through
> That shady garden whose broad tower ascends
> From chamber over chamber; there I dwelt,
> The flowers my guests, the birds my pensioners,
> Books my companions, and but few beside.

After the escape of Napoleon from Elba the English colony at Tours broke up in alarm; but Landor on his part wrote to Carnot, saying that he proposed to remain; received in answer a courteous assurance of protection; and in fact stayed unmolested at Tours throughout the Hundred Days. After the catastrophe of Waterloo he one day saw dismount, in the courtyard of the prefect's house, a traveller in whom he recognized, or at least always afterwards imagined that he had recognized, the fugitive Emperor himself.

France under the restored Bourbons had no charms for Landor. His wife and his brother Robert were now with him. The latter had a strong desire to visit Italy; Landor insisted that they should travel together; and in the month of September, 1815, "after contests with his landlady of the most tremendous description,"

they set off accordingly. They posted through France to Savoy, along a route beset on the right hand by the French forces, and on the left by the German army of occupation. An account of their journey is preserved in the letters written by Robert Landor to his mother, letters which betoken some measure both of chivalrous prejudice in favour of the pretty, reconciled, and now, as it would appear, somewhat ostentatiously meek and submissive sister-in-law, and of brotherly impatience with Walter's moods and caprices. When the travellers had made their way as far as Savoy Landor found himself enchanted with the scenery of that province, and for a moment thought of fixing his abode at Chambéry, but finally decided to push on into Italy. Before the end of the year he had arrived with his wife at Como, where he found himself disappointed and discontented at first, but where after a time he determined to settle down.

At Como Landor and his wife continued to live for the next three years. Before the summer of the third a boy was born to them, their first child, whom Landor christened Arnold Savage, after that Speaker of the House of Commons whom he conceived to be an ancestor of his own by the mother's side; other children, a girl and two more boys, followed within a few years. Landor delighted in the ways and company of children, and is the author of some of the most beautiful of all sayings about them. His own, as long as they were of tender age, were a source of extreme happiness to him; and their presence had for some years the effect of bringing peace at any rate, although no real concord, into his home relations. For the rest, in his life at Como as in his life at Llanthony, and indeed at all times, Landor was never so much taken up by anything as by his own reflexions,

and no company was so real to him as that with which he associated in imagination during his daily walks and nightly musings. In the way of practical contact with men during the period while he lived at Como there is not much to tell. Among his few visitors from abroad was "the learned and modest Bekker;" and he speaks of the "calm and philosophical Sironi" as his most frequent companion among the natives of the place. He had also some acquaintance in 1817 with an Englishman then resident near the lake, Sir Charles Wolseley, afterwards conspicuous as one of the leaders of the Birmingham reform agitation. They were both witnesses to the scandalous life led by the Princess of Wales in the villa on the lake where she was then residing; and Landor was, or imagined himself to be, subject to some insult or annoyance from those of her suite. "This alone," he wrote three years afterwards in his chivalrous way, when the same Sir Charles Wolseley brought forward his name as that of one in a position to give valuable evidence on her trial, "this alone, which might create and keep alive the most active resentment in others, would impose eternal silence on me." Of these and other matters Landor wrote frequently to Southey, whom he also kept supplied with presents of books, collected chiefly in the course of excursions to Milan. On his own account Landor was never much of a book collector, or rather he never kept many of the books he bought, but mastered, meditated, and then gave them away. It was always a matter of remark how disproportionate was the extent of his library to that of his reading. In the summer of 1817 Landor received a visit at Como from Southey in person. "Well do I remember," he makes Southey say in one of his subsequent *Imaginary Conversations*, "well do I remember our

long conversations in the silent and solitary church of Sant' Abondio (surely the coolest spot in Italy), and how often I turned back my head toward the open door, fearing lest some pious passer-by, or some more distant one in the wood above, pursuing the pathway that leads to the tower of Luitprand, should hear the roof echo with your laughter at the stories you had collected about the brotherhood and sisterhood of the place."

But Southey's spirits were on this occasion not what they had been in the old Llanthony days. He had lost his son Herbert, the darling of his heart, twelve months before, and had since suffered extreme vexation from the attacks and the rebuffs which he had undergone in connexion with the piratical publication of his *Wat Tyler*.

> Grief had swept over him; days darken'd round:
> Bellagio, Valintelvi, smiled in vain,
> And Monte Rosa from Helvetia far
> Advanced to meet us, mild in majesty
> Above the glittering crests of giant sons
> Station'd around . . . in vain too! all in vain.

Landor's stay at Como was brought to a characteristic termination in the autumn of 1818. An Italian poet, Monti, had written some disparaging verses against England. Landor instantly retorted with his old schoolboy weapons, and printed some opprobrious Latin verses on Monti, who summoned him before the local courts on a charge of libel. Thereupon he wrote to threaten the magistrate with a thrashing. For this he was ordered to quit the country, The time allowed him expired on the 19th of September. "I remained a week longer, rather wishing to be sent for to Milan." No such result ensuing, he retreated in a stately manner on the 28th, discharging more Latin verses as he went, this time against the Aus-

trian Governor, Count Strasoldo. The next two months he spent in a villa rented from the Marchese Pallavacini, at Albaro, near Genoa. Before the close of the year he had gone on with his family to Pisa.

At Pisa, with the exception of one summer, the first after his arrival, which he spent at Pistoia, Landor remained until September, 1821. It is a singular accident in the history of the famous little Tuscan city, that it should have been chosen by three of the most illustrious of modern Englishmen for their abode almost at the same time. Shelley established himself there in January, 1820, a year later than Landor; Byron in October, 1821, a month after Landor had left. With neither of these brother poets had Landor any personal acquaintance. The current slanders against Shelley's character, especially in connexion with the tragic issue of his first marriage, had been repeated to Landor by Mackintosh in a form which prevented him from seeking the younger poet's acquaintance, or even accepting it when it was offered, while they were both at Pisa. This Landor afterwards bitterly regretted. He had the heartiest admiration for Shelley's poetry, and learned when it was too late to admire his character no less. We cannot doubt that the two would have understood each other if they had met, and that between Landor, the loftiest and most massive spirit of his age, and Shelley, the most beautiful and ardent, there would have sprung up relations full of pleasure for themselves and of interest for posterity. For Byron, on the other hand, Landor had little admiration and less esteem. He had gone out of his way to avoid meeting him once in England. Neither is it certain that personal intercourse would have led to an improved understanding between them. Landor's fas-

tidious breeding might easily have taken umbrage at the strain of vulgarity there was in Byron; his pride at the other's trick of assumption; his sincerity at the other's affectations; especially if Byron had chosen to show, as he often did show with new acquaintances, his worst side first. And circumstances soon arose which would have made friendly intercourse between them harder than ever.

But before coming to these, it is necessary to fix in our minds the true nature of Landor's position, intellectual and personal, towards the two opposite parties into which the chief creative forces of English literature were at this time divided. One of these was a party of conservation and conformity, the other of expansion and revolt. To the conservative camp belonged the converted Jacobins Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, and, starting from a different point of departure, Scott; while the men of revolution were first of all Byron, now in the full blaze of his notoriety and his fame, and Shelley, whose name and writings were still comparatively unknown. The work of all creative spirits tends in the long-run towards expansion; towards the enrichment of human lives and the enlargement of human ideals. Wordsworth by his revelation of the living affinities between man and nature, and of the dignity of simple joys and passions, Coleridge by introducing into the inert mass of English orthodoxy and literalism the leaven of German transcendental speculation, Scott by kindling the dormant sympathy of the modern mind with past ages, lives, and customs, were perhaps each in his way doing as much to enrich the lives and enlarge the ideas of men as either Shelley, with his auroral visions of an emancipated future for the race, or Byron with his dazzling illustration of the principle of rebellion in his own person. But so far as concerns the religious, political,

and social forms surrounding them, the creative spirits, with the exception of a few who, like Keats, stand apart, "and simply sing the most heart-easing things," divide themselves, like other men, into two parties, one seeing nothing keenly but the good, and the other nothing keenly but the evil, in what is,—one fearing all, and the other hoping all, from change. The natural position of Landor was midway between the two. On the one hand, he was incapable of such parochial rusticity and narrowness as marked the judgments of Wordsworth in matters lying outside the peculiar kindling power of his genius; or of such vague, metaphysical reconciliations between the existing and the ideal as contented Coleridge; or of Southey's blind antagonism to change; or of Scott's romantic partiality for feudal and kingly forms and usages. But on the other hand Landor saw human nature, not in the ethereal, disembodied, iridescent semblance which it bore to the imagination of Shelley, but in its practical attributes of flesh and blood, and his watchwords by no means included, like those of the younger poet, the universal indignant rejection of all hereditary beliefs and bondages together. Neither did Landor, in sharing Byron's hatred of political tyranny and contempt for conventional judgments, indulge in anything like Byron's clamorous parade or cynic recklessness, but upheld and cherished whatever was really respectable in respectability, and maintained inviolate his antique principle of decorum even in rebellion. In spite of the turbulent reputation he had earned by his various collisions with authority, Landor regarded himself, to use his own words, as "radically a conservative in everything useful." In the matter of religious belief and practice he is commonly spoken of as a pagan, but his habits of thought were rather what are now-a-days termed posi-

tive; that is to say, he held the ultimate mysteries of the universe insoluble either by theology or philosophy, and estimated creeds and doctrines simply according to their effect on human happiness.

> Divinity is little worth having, much less paying for, unless she teaches humanity. The use of religion on earth is to inculcate the moral law; in other words, in the words of Jesus Christ, to love our neighbour as ourselves.

And again, in setting practical over doctrinal religion:—

> Christianity, as I understand it, lies not in belief but in action. That servant is a good servant who obeys the just orders of his master; not he who repeats his words, measures his stature, or traces his pedigree.

Accepting Christianity in this sense, Landor was never tired of enforcing the contrast between the practical religion of the gospels and the official and doctrinal religion of priests and kings. In like manner as regards philosophy; for abstract and metaphysical speculations he had no sympathy, scarcely even any toleration.

> The business of philosophy is to examine and estimate all those things which come within the cognizance of the understanding. Speculations on any that lie beyond are only pleasant dreams, leaving the mind to the lassitude of disappointment. They are easier than geometry and dialectics; they are easier than the efforts of a well-regulated imagination in the structure of a poem.

To the same purport, Diogenes is made to reply to Plato:—

> I meddle not at present with infinity or eternity; when I can comprehend them, I will talk about them. You metaphysicians kill the flower-bearing and fruit-bearing glebe with delving, and turning over, and sifting, and never bring up any solid and malleable mass from the dark profundity in which

you labour. The intellectual world, like the physical, is inapplicable to profit and incapable of cultivation a little way below the surface.

Neither could Landor admit that philosophy even in the sense above defined, that is philosophy dealing with the facts of life and experience, could be profitably pursued apart from directly practical issues. Human welfare, and not abstract truth, should be its aim.

This is philosophy, to make remote things tangible, common things extensively useful, useful things extensively common, and to leave the least necessary for the last. . . . . Truth is not reasonably the main and ultimate object of philosophy; philosophy should seek truth merely as the means of acquiring and propagating happiness.

In politics Landor was by no means the mere rebel which a saying of Carlyle's, repeated by Emerson, has tended to represent him. He was indeed the staunchest friend of liberty, understanding by liberty the right of every human being "to enjoy his reason for the promotion of his happiness;" and the most untiring enemy of all forms of despotism, usurpation, persecution, or corruption which in his view interfered with that right. Beyond this, he was far from being in any general sense a political innovator or leveller. With democracy he had no sympathy, regarding that majority of all ranks whom he called "the vulgar" as of infinitely less importance in a commonwealth than its two or three great men. "A mob," he says, "is not worth a man." Accordingly, he was no great believer in popular suffrage, and would on no account condescend to personal contact with its processes and instruments. He prided himself on never having made use of the votes which he possessed in four counties, or entered a club, or been present at a political meeting. Revolu-

tionist as he was in regard to the despotic governments of the continent, convinced as he always continued to be of the schoolboy doctrine of the virtue of tyrannicide, he advocated no very sweeping reforms in the politics of his native country. He would "change little, but correct much." He believed greatly in the high qualities of his own order, the untitled gentry of England, and was fond of scheming such a reform of the peerage as should convert that body from a more or less corrupt and degenerate oligarchy into a genuine aristocracy of worth and talent. He was, as we have seen, a great denouncer of what he thought the trucklings, derogations, and quackeries of ordinary political practice and partisanship; but his chief practical exhortations were against wars of conquest and annexation; against alliance with the despotic powers for the suppression of insurgent nationalities; against the over-endowment of ecclesiastical dignitaries; in favour of the removal of Catholic disabilities; in favour of factory acts, of the mitigation of the penal laws, and of ecclesiastical and agrarian legislation for the relief of the Irish.

If Landor by his general opinions thus stood midway between the conservative and revolutionary groups of his contemporaries, we have seen already on which side of the two his literary sympathies were engaged. He belonged to the generation of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Charles Lamb, and had grown up in admiration of the writings of the so-called Lake school for years before their light was dimmed by the younger star of Byron. At the same time, Landor was essentially the reverse of a partisan; his literary judgments were perfectly open, and he was nobly eager to acknowledge merit whenever he could perceive it. If he can be charged with

partisanship in any instance, it is in that of Southey, whom he placed as a poet not only far above his young antagonist Byron, but above Wordsworth also. For this mistake, Landor's loyal and devoted friendship is undoubtedly in part responsible. As between Southey and Byron, however, we must remember that the excellencies of the one and the faults of the other were precisely of the kind most calculated to impress Landor. He looked in literature first of all to the technical points of form and workmanship; Southey was one of the soundest and most scrupulous of workmen; Byron one of the most impetuous and lax; and considering how rarely poets have ever judged aright of each other, how hard it is for any man ever to judge aright of a contemporary, we shall not too much wonder if Landor failed to see that the skilful, versatile, level, industrious poetry of Southey contained nothing which would strongly interest a second generation, while that of the other, with its glaring faults, its felicities that seem so casual even when they are most irresistible, its headlong current over rough and smooth, was the utterance of a personality that would impress and fascinate posterity to the latest day.

All these relations of Landor to his contemporaries come into the light in the course of his correspondence and his work at Pisa. His intercourse with Southey, in the shape of letters and consignments of books, is as close as ever. We find him also in correspondence with Wordsworth himself, on terms of great mutual respect and courtesy. On the literary controversies of the hour Landor printed some just and striking observations, although in a form which prevented them from making any impression on the public mind, in a book published at Pisa in 1820. This was the volume called *Idyllia*

Heroica, containing the carefully matured fruits of all his Latin studies and exercises during many years past. The earlier Oxford edition, printed, as we have seen, about the time Landor was leaving Llanthony, had contained, besides other miscellaneous matter, five heroic tales or idyls in hexameter verse; this Pisa edition contains ten, most of which Landor afterwards turned into English for his volume entitled *Hellenics*, and upwards of fifty sets of hendecasyllabics. Like all the really original writing of the moderns in this language, Landor's Latin poems are not easy reading. His style is completely personal, as indeed we should expect from a scholar who used Latin often by preference for the expression of his most intimate thoughts and feelings; it does not recall the diction or cadences of any given master; it is not perfectly free from grammatical and prosodial slips; but it is remarkably spontaneous, energetic, and alive. The volume concludes with a long critical essay, developed from the *Quæstiuncula* of 1803, on the cultivation and use of Latin—*De cultu atque usu Latini sermonis.*

This essay contains much that would, if Landor had only written it in his noble English instead of his only less noble Latin, have counted among his most interesting work. He has written, he says, because too much leisure is prejudicial alike to virtue and to happiness; and he has published his work in Italy because he desires to avoid being confounded by those among whom he is sojourning with the promiscuous crowd of travelling Englishmen (*quia nolui* turmalis *esse, nolui opinione hominum cum cæteris Britannnorum peregrinantium, cujuscumque sint ordinis, conturbari*). His avowed purpose is the paradoxical one of pleading for the Latin language as that proper to be used by all civilized nations for the expres-

sion of their most dignified and durable thoughts. Why should those be called the dead languages which alone will never die? Why should any one choose to engrave on glass when it is open to him to engrave on beryl-stone? What literary pleasure can be so great to a man as that of composing in the language of his earliest and most fruitful lessons? English, even English, may decay, for there are signs abroad of the decadence of England's polity, and that of her language cannot fail to follow; but Latin has survived and will continue to survive all the vicissitudes of time. And much more to the same effect; to which is added a condensed critical narrative of the history of Latin poetry since the Renaissance, bespeaking a prodigious familiarity with a literature to most people neither familiar nor interesting. This is interspersed with criticisms, in like manner succinct and authoritative, on the principal poets of ancient Rome, and with many searching observations, both general and analytic, on the poets and poetry of England. Landor has also his fling at France, remarking how the once vaunted *Henriade* of Voltaire has sunk to the level of a lesson-book for teaching heroic metre—and heroic patience—to the young; but contrasting, on the other hand, the treatment of poets in France, where every man takes to himself a share of their glory, with their treatment in England, where no man will tolerate any poetic glory except his own. In the course of the discussion Landor finds occasion for several of his striking sentences—as this, that every great poet is in some sort the creator of that man who appreciates the delights of the Paradise prepared by him (*magnus poeta quisque creator hominis istius qui, liceat ita dicere, Paradiso suo fruatur*).

With reference to the English writers of his own day, Landor has a fine and on the whole a just outburst against

the Broughams, Jeffreys, and their meaner rivals or satellites in the trade of criticism as then practised; followed by an apostrophe to Wordsworth—"admirable man, citizen, philosopher, poet!"—whom neither seclusion, nor dignity of life, nor the common reverence of men, has been able to protect from the virulence of these enemies of all good men and writers. And yet, if only he had been dead before they were born, these same traducers would have been the foremost to bring their incense to his tomb. Coming to Byron, Landor begins with the saying that the greatest poets have in all times been good men, and there is no worse mistake than to suppose vice the natural concomitant of genius. But most men prefer the second-best to the best; and when there appears a writer of talent and fertility, whose life and style are alike full of showy faults, he is sure of notoriety and acclamation. The true advice for him is to mend his morals, to be more careful of his style, to control the ardours of his temperament, to rush less hastily into print, and then by the time he is forty he may well produce something epical and truly great (*ingens nescio quid et vere epicum*). The passage is far from being either unkind or unjust. Southey in the next year quoted it, adding words expressive of his enthusiastic regard and admiration for its author, in a note to the preface of his *Vision of Judgment*. This is the preface in which Southey made his famous attack upon Byron and the "Satanic school;" an attack which, with the inconceivably unlucky performance which followed it in the shape of an apotheosis of George III. in lumbering and lame hexameters, gave Byron, who, as he said, "liked a row," an opportunity too good to be lost. We all know the consequences. If Southey's attack is remembered, it is because of Byron's never-to-be-forgotten

retort. I speak, not of the prose correspondence, in which Byron with his sneers and his unfairness makes no such honourable figure as his injudicious but sincerely indignant and perfectly loyal antagonist; but of Byron's own poetic, mocking, and immortal *Vision*. In a note to this Byron dealt a passing thrust at the laureate's incongruous friend Savagius, or Savage Landor—"such is his grim cognomen"—"who cultivates much private renown in the shape of Latin verses," and whose opinion of his late sovereign was so strikingly at variance with that of his friend. Byron next returned to the charge against Landor in a note to *The Island*. Having in this poem avowedly paraphrased Landor's lines upon a sea-shell in *Gebir*, which he had heard Shelley recite, Byron takes occasion to declare that he has never read the poem, and to quote Gifford's opinion that the rest of it is "trash of the worst and most insane description." Then again there are the well-known lines in Don Juan,—

> And that deep-mouthed Beotian Savage Landor
> Has taken for a swan rogue Southey's gander.

"Deep-mouthed" is good; and in all this there was much more mischief than malice on Byron's part. His account of his real feelings towards Landor is extant, in the diluted report of Lady Blessington, as follows:—

At Pisa, a friend told me that Walter Savage Landor had declared he either would not or could not read my works. I asked my officious friend if he was sure which it was that Landor said, as the *would not* was not offensive, and the *could not* was highly so. After some reflection, he, of course *en ami*, chose the most disagreeable signification; and I marked down Landor in the tablet of memory as a person to whom a *coup-de-patte* must be given in my forthcoming work, though he

really is a man whose brilliant talents and profound erudition I cannot help admiring as much as I respect his character.

Landor's retort to the Byronic *coups-de-patte* appeared presently in the shape of an apologue, in one of his *Conversations*, where the personage of Byron is shadowed forth under that of Mr. George Nelly, an imaginary son of Lord Rochester's :—

Whenever he wrote a bad poem, he supported his sinking fame by some signal act of profligacy, an elegy by a seduction, an heroic by an adultery, a tragedy by a divorce. On the remark of a learned man, that irregularity is no indication of genius, he began to lose ground rapidly, when on a sudden he cried out at the Haymarket, *There is no God.* It was then surmised more generally and more gravely that there was something in him, and he stood upon his legs almost to the last. *Say what you will,* once whispered a friend of mine, *there are things in him strong as poison, and original as sin.*

The subjects discussed in Landor's Latin essay had been literary alone. But other things besides literature occupied his thoughts in these years at Pisa. In 1819 and the following years began the first stirrings of those political movements which are not ended yet—the first uprisings, after the settlement of 1815, of the spirit of liberty and nationality against dynasties and despotisms. The Spanish republics of South America had struck for freedom against the mother country; the Spaniards themselves next rose against their king, the restored and perjured Ferdinand; the flame spread to Italy, where the flag of revolt was raised against the Bourbons in Naples and the Austrians in Lombardy, and to Greece, where peasant and brigand, trader and pirate, women and children, young and old, on a sudden astonished the world with deeds of

desperate and successful heroism against the Turk. All these movements Landor followed with passionate sympathy, and with corresponding detestation the measures of the Holy Alliance for their repression, the deliberations of the Congress of Verona, and the French invasion of Spain. Canning's tentative and half-hearted efforts in the cause of liberty he condemned scarcely less than the despotic predilections of Castlereagh. He would have had England strike everywhere for the oppressed against the oppressor. His own Spanish title and decoration Landor had indignantly sent back on the violation by Ferdinand of his Charter. He now (1821) addressed to the people of Italy an essay or oration on representative government, written in their own language, which he by this time wrote and spoke with freedom, though his speaking accent was strongly English to the last. From these years date many of the thoughts and feelings to which he gave expression during those next ensuing in his political dialogues.

Poems like Shelley's *Hellas* and his *Ode to Naples* have their counterpart in the work of Landor in two pieces inspired at this time by the European, and especially the Greek, revolution. One is addressed *to Corinth;* the other is called *Regeneration;* both illustrate the noblest altitudes—and, at the same time, it must be said, the curious baldnesses and depressions—of which Landor's poetic thought and poetic style were capable. I quote the best part of the second. The reference towards the end is to the destruction of the Turkish fleet by Canaris with his two fire-ships and handful of men.

> We are what suns and winds and waters make us
> The mountains are our sponsors, and the rills
> Fashion and win their nursling with their smiles.
> But where the land is dim from tyranny,

There tiny pleasures occupy the place
Of glories and of duties; as the feet
Of fabled faeries when the sun goes down
Trip o'er the grass where wrestlers strove by day.
Then Justice, call'd the Eternal One above,
Is more inconstant than the buoyant form
That bursts into existence from the froth
Of ever-varying ocean: what is best
Then becomes worst; what loveliest, most deform'd.
The heart is hardest in the softest climes,
The passions flourish, the affections die.
O thou vast tablet of these awful truths
That fillest all the space between the seas,
Spreading from Venice's deserted courts
To the Tarentine and Hydruntine moles,
What lifts thee up? what shakes thee? 'tis the breath
Of God. Awake, ye nations! spring to life!
Let the last work of his right hand appear
Fresh with his image, Man. Thou recreant slave
That sittest afar off and helpest not,
O thou degenerate Albion! with what shame
Do I survey thee, pushing forth the spunge
At thy spear's length, in mockery at the thirst
Of holy Freedom in his agony,
And prompt and keen to pierce the wounded side.
Must Italy then wholly rot away
Amid her slime, before she germinate
Into fresh vigour, into form again?
What thunder bursts upon mine ear? some isle
Hath surely risen from the gulphs profound,
Eager to suck the sunshine from the breast
Of beauteous Nature, and to catch the gale
From golden Hermus and Melena's brow.
A greater thing than isle, than continent,
Than earth itself, than ocean circling earth,
Hath risen there; regenerate Man hath risen.
Generous old bard of Chios! not that Jove
Deprived thee in thy latter days of sight
Would I complain, but that no higher theme

Than a disdainful youth, a lawless king,
A pestilence, a pyre, awoke thy song,
When on the Chian coast, one javelin's throw
From where thy tombstone, where thy cradle stood,
Twice twenty self-devoted Greeks assail'd
The naval host of Asia, at one blow
Scattered it into air . . . and Greece was free . . .
And ere these glories beam'd, thy day had closed.
Let all that Elis ever saw, give way,
All that Olympian Jove e'er smiled upon:
The Marathonian columns never told
A tale more glorious, never Salamis,
Nor, faithful in the centre of the false,
Platea, nor Anthela, from whose mount
Benignant Ceres wards the blessed Laws,
And sees the Amphictyon dip his weary foot
In the warm streamlet of the straits below.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE AT FLORENCE—THE IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS.
(1821—1829.)

Both in telling of Landor's literary collisions with Byron, and in tracing the course of his sympathies with the insurgent populations of Southern Europe, we have been led beyond the strict limits of his stay at Pisa. He left that city in September 1821; and left, it, strange to say, at peace, having had only one slight brush with authority, and that only with the censorship of the press, concerning a line in one of his Latin poems. He went next to Florence, where he established himself with his family in a handsome suite of apartments in the Medici palace. Here he lived for five years, and for the three following principally in a country house, the Villa Castiglione, distant half an hour's walk from the same city.

During these eight years Landor was engaged, to the exclusion of nearly all other work, with the production of his *Imaginary Conversations*. The experimental part of his literary career had now ended, and the period of solid and confident production had begun. He had found the form and mode of expression that best suited his genius. The idea of writing prose dialogues or conversations between illustrious personages of the past was no new one in his mind. In the days of his connexion with

Whig journalism twenty years before, he had offered to Adair for insertion in the *Morning Chronicle* a dialogue between Burke and Grenville, which had been declined. He had about the same time written another between Henry IV. and Arnold Savage. After that he had never regularly resumed this form of composition until towards the date of his departure from Pisa. But it was a form congenial to every habit of his mind. The greatness of great characters was what most impressed him in the world. Their exploits and sufferings, their potencies of intellect and will, the operation of their influence and example, were for him the essence of history. He could not bring himself to regard statistical or social facts, or the working of collective or impersonal forces in human affairs, as deserving from the historian any commensurate degree of attention with the lives and achievements of individuals. In this temper of hero-worship Landor was a true disciple of antiquity, and he regarded the whole field of history from the ancient point of view. The extraordinary range and thoroughness of his reading made him familiar with all the leading figures of Time. His dramatic instinct prompted him to reanimate them in thought with the features and the accents of life. It was in converse with these mute companions that he was accustomed to spend the best part of his days and nights. "Even those with whom I have not lived, and whom indeed I have never seen, affect me by sympathy as if I had known them intimately, and I hold with them in my walks many imaginary conversations." Elsewhere Landor adorns and amplifies in his choicest vein this account of his own habits, in order to transfer it to the lips of Petrarch. "When I was younger I was fond of wandering in solitary places, and never was afraid of slumbering in

woods and grottoes. Among the chief pleasures of my life, and among the commonest of my occupations, was the bringing before me such heroes and heroines of antiquity, such poets and sages, such of the prosperous and the unfortunate, as most interested me by their courage, their eloquence, or their adventures. Engaging them in the conversations best suited to their characters, I knew perfectly their manners, their steps, their voices: and often did I moisten with my tears the models I had been forming of the less happy."

If it was thus an essential habit of Landor's mind to think about persons, and dramatically, to think in fragments, and disconnectedly, was not less so. In his mental communion with the heroes and heroines of the past, he began by framing for them isolated thoughts and sentences, led them on next to an interchange of several, and added more by degrees until the whole scene was filled out. He confesses as much himself, in a metaphor which is characteristic also of his tastes as a lover of trees and planting. "I confess to you that a few detached thoughts and images have always been the beginnings of my works. Narrow slips have risen up, more or fewer, above the surface. These gradually became larger and more consolidated; freshness and verdure first covered one part, then another; then plants of firmer and higher growth, however scantily, took their places, then extended their roots and branches; and among them, and around about them, in a little while you yourself, and as many more as I desired, found places for study and recreation." Dialogue is a form of literature in which all these peculiarities could find play, not only without impediment but with advantage. Accordingly Landor was himself astonished at the abundance and the satisfaction with which he found

himself pouring out his intellectual stores in this form when he had once begun. He was moved to do so partly by the correspondence of Southey, who was full at this time of a projected book of *Colloquies* of his own; and partly by the conversation and encouragement of Francis Hare. Landor had no idea at the outset how far his new literary enterprise was destined to carry him. He still meditated, as the great work of his life, a history to be written either in co-operation with Southey or separately. This idea of working in conjunction with Southey, long and seriously entertained by Landor, is a signal proof, coming from a mind so rooted in independence and self-sufficiency as his, of his unbounded and deferential regard for his friend. The idea was gradually and naturally dropped somewhat later, and Landor conceived instead that of writing by himself, in the form of a series of letters, a systematic commentary on the history of England from the year 1775. In the meantime he laboured impetuously at his dialogues. He had before him the examples of many illustrious writers in all ages; of Plato, Xenophon, and Lucian, of Cicero and Boethius, of Erasmus and More; and, among English authors of comparatively recent date, those of Langhorne, Lyttelton, and Hurd. It is needless to say that he did not closely follow, much less imitate, any of his predecessors. He was not at first sure of the method to be adopted, and began by planning set conversations on particular texts and topics. This was soon given up, and he wrote according to the choice or the preoccupation of the moment. For fear of being at any time caught echoing either the matter or the manner of any other writer, he used to abstain altogether from reading before he himself began to compose, "lest the theme should haunt me, and

some of the ideas take the liberty of playing with mine. I do not wish the children of my brain to imitate the gait or learn any tricks of others." By the 9th of March, 1822, he had finished fifteen dialogues, and burnt two others which had failed to satisfy him. The manuscript of the fifteen he consigned not many days later by a private hand to Longmans, to whom he at the same time addressed his proposals for their publication.

The parcel was delayed in delivery, and no answer reached Landor for more than three months. Long before that his impatience had risen to boiling-point. He rushed headlong to the direst conclusions. Of course the manuscript had been lost; or of course it had been refused; or both; and it was just like his invariable ill-fortune. He was in despair. He took to his bed. He swore he would never write another line, and burnt what he had got by him already written. "This disappointment has brought back my old bilious complaint, together with the sad reflection on that fatality which has followed me through life, of doing everything in vain. I have, however, had the resolution to tear in pieces all my sketches and projects, and to forswear all future undertakings. I try to sleep away my time, and pass two-thirds of the twenty-four hours in bed. I may speak of myself as of a dead man. I will say, then, that these *Conversations* contained as forcible writing as exists on earth."

This was early in June, and it was not until the end of August that news of the manuscript at last arrived. In the meantime Landor had recovered his equanimity, and was busy writing new dialogues and making additions to the old. Longmans in fact refused the book. A whole succession of other publishers to whom it was offered either refused it also, or else offered terms which were

unacceptable. By this time, however, Landor was again too deeply engrossed with the work of writing to bestow much attention or indignation upon such impediments. He had now put everything concerned with the publication into the hands of Julius Hare, to whom he was as yet known only through his brother Francis, but who eagerly undertook and loyally discharged the task. Hare, then a tutor at Trinity College, Cambridge, persuaded a publisher named Taylor, with whom he was on terms of personal friendship, to take up the book; the profits or losses, if any, to be shared equally between author and publisher. Presently there arose differences between Taylor and Hare about the suppression of words or passages which the former judged exceptionable. First Wordsworth, then Southey, was proposed as umpire in these differences, Southey finally agreeing to undertake the office; but even against Southey Taylor adhered to some of his objections. All this occasioned considerable delay. In the meantime the rumour of the forthcoming book aroused no slight degree of expectation. As a foretaste of its contents the critical dialogue between Southey and Porson on the merits of Wordsworth's poetry was published by agreement in one of the monthly reviews in 1823. The best judges were interested and struck, and Wordsworth himself much gratified. Landor's original intention had been to dedicate his book to Wordsworth, and his announcement of the fact had been received by the poet with the utmost pleasure. But while the volumes were in the press it seemed to Landor that some of his expressions against those in authority were stronger than could be pleasing to one of Wordsworth's opinions; so with courteous explanations he changed his purpose, and when the book at last appeared, in 1824, its two volumes were dedicated respec-

tively, the first to the husband of his wife's sister, Major-General Stopford; the second to a soldier of liberty, General Mina, the champion of the popular cause in Spain. In the course of a preface prefixed to the first volume Landor describes his present purposes in literature as follows:—"Should health and peace of mind remain to me, and the enjoyment of a country where, if there are none to assist at least there is none to molest me, I hope to leave behind me completed the great object of my studies, an orderly and solid work in history; and I cherish the persuasion that Posterity will not confound me with the Coxes and Foxes of the age."

In the two volumes thus produced and prefaced, dialogues the most dissimilar in subject, and the most various in the personages introduced, are brought together without system or connexion. Lord Brooke and Sir Philip Sidney discourse on letters and morality beneath the oaks of Penshurst. Richard I. encounters his faithful Abbot of Boxley on the road by Hagenau. Southey recites to Porson the *Laodamia* of Wordsworth, and they criticize its beauties and shortcomings. Æschines and Phocion discuss the character of Demosthenes and the prospects of Greece on one page, and on the next Queen Elizabeth banters Cecil on his slight esteem for poetry and poets. General Kleber opens the locket and the letter taken from the body of an English officer killed in wantonness by the French during the war in Egypt. Demosthenes discusses policy and oratory with his teacher Eubulides, and Buonaparte receives the adulations of the Senate through its president. Milton converses with Andrew Marvel on the forms and varieties of comedy and tragedy, and Washington with Franklin on the causes and conduct of the war between the American colonies and the mother country,

and on the political prospects of each in the future. Roger Ascham warns his lovely pupil, Lady Jane Grey, of the perils that await her after her marriage. The wisdom of Bacon and of Hooker are exhibited together, and the worldliness of the one set in contrast to the piety of the other. The extravagances of despotism and of superstition are set forth in a vein of Aristophanic caricature in a conversation of Louis XIV. with his confessor. Pericles and Sophocles walk and talk amid the new-limned and new-carven glories of the Acropolis. The prospects of revolutionary Spain and revolutionary Greece, and the duties of the European powers to both, are discussed in a dialogue of General Lacy with the Cura Merino, and another of Prince Mavrocordato with Colocotroni. The Scotch philosopher and the Scotch poet, Hume and Home, converse of their own problematic relationship, of orthodoxy, and of toleration. Henry VIII. intrudes suddenly upon his cast-off wife, Anne Boleyn, in the days just before her execution. Cicero moralizes with his brother Quinctus concerning life, death, friendship, and glory, on the eve of his last birthday. The seditious Tooke wins from the Tory Johnson a kindly hearing for his views on English language and orthography, views which in fact are Landor's own, and the effect of which makes itself practically perceived in the spelling both of this and of his other published writings, earlier and later. In his own person Landor appears as interlocutor in two dialogues; one principally on architecture and gardening, held with his landlord at Genoa; the other on poetry, criticism, and Boileau with the French translator of Milton, the Abbé Delille. Interspersed are supplementary notes and dissertations in Landor's customary vein of mingled whim and wisdom, of ardent enthusiasm and lofty scorn,

all conveyed in the same dignified, sedate, authoritative tones. Finally, "as a voluntary to close the work," he appends the poem on the Greek and Italian revolutions of which we have quoted a part above.

The book made when it appeared no great impression on the popular mind, but upon that of students and lovers of high literature one as strong at least as Landor's friends expected. He could no longer be charged with cultivating private renown among a select band of admirers. He had challenged the general verdict over an extensive field of thought and imagination. The verdict of the critics, in that age of carping and cudgelling literary partisanship, could not be expected to be unanimous, least of all in the case of a writer of judgments so decisive and opinions so untempered as Landor. Jeffrey only allowed Hazlitt to notice the book in the *Edinburgh Review* when he had ascertained that the enthusiastic opinion which Hazlitt had formed of Landor's powers of mind and style, and of the beauty of particular dialogues, was qualified by strong disapproval of many of his opinions, especially of his opinions on Buonaparte; and even then Jeffrey cut and modified his contributor's work, so that the article as it appeared was of a very mixed character. The *Quarterly* as a matter of course was hostile; but the sting had been taken out of Quarterly hostility by a dexterous stroke of friendship on the part of Julius Hare. This was a criticism which Hare published in the *London Review* just before the appearance of the *Quarterly*, and in which he anticipated all the reprehensions of the Tory oracle, putting them into the mouth of an imaginary interlocutor whom he calls Hargreaves, and represents as a cynical, scribbling barrister, and himself traversing and over-riding them. From Southey and Wordsworth there came,

written on a single sheet, a letter of thanks and praise which Landor greatly cherished. It was felt and said, among those who have the right to speak for futurity, that a new classic had arisen. One thing at any rate there was no gainsaying, and that was the excellence of Landor's English, the strength, dignity, and harmony of his prose style, qualities in which he was obviously without a living rival. For the first time, Landor was able to anticipate a certain measure of profit from his work. Both to profit and popularity, indeed, he was accustomed to express an indifference which was quite sincere; but the encouragement of his peers added a real zest to the continuance of his labours. Almost before the first edition had appeared, he had prepared materials for its expansion in a second, to consist of three volumes instead of two. He kept forwarding corrections and insertions for the original dialogues, the latter including some of the best matter which they contain in the form which we now possess. Thus to the dialogue of the Ciceros he added the allegory of Truth, the most perfect, I think, next to one (and that also is by Landor) in the English language; to that of Lacy and Merino, the grandest of all his outbursts concerning the principles of English policy abroad; and even to the brief, high-pitched, and high-wrought dialogues of Lady Jane Grey and Anne Boleyn, a page or two each. To the passage on Mr. George Nelly the death of Byron, which had happened about the time of its original publication, induces Landor to append this noble palinode:—

If, before the dialogue was printed, he had performed those services to Greece, which will render his name illustrious to eternity, those by which he merited such funereal honours as, in the parsimony of praise, knowing its value in republics, she hardly would have decreed to the most deserving of her

heroes; if, I repeat it, he had performed those services, the performance of which I envy him from my soul, and as much as any other does the gifts of heaven he threw away so carelessly, never would I, from whatever provocation, have written a syllable against him. I had avoided him; I had slighted him; he knew it. He did not love me; he could not. While he spoke or wrote against me, I said nothing in print or conversation; the taciturnity of pride gave way to other feelings when my friends, men so much better and (let the sincerity of the expression be questioned by those who are unacquainted with us) so much dearer, so much oftener in my thoughts, were assailed by him too intemperately.

Landor's materials for his third volume comprised no less than twenty dialogues, including one very long, rambling, and heterogeneous, between the Duc de Richelieu, a vulgar Irish woman of title, a general also Irish, and a virtuous English schoolmaster turned sailor. With this were associated some of Landor's best brief dialogues of character and passion, notably the Roman two of Marcellus with Hannibal and Tiberius with Vipsania; several of his monumental satires against tyranny and superstition, including the terrible dialogue of Peter the Great with his son Alexis, and the playful one of Bossuet and the Duchesse de Fontanges; a discussion between Rousseau and Malesherbes, which is one of the best of the modern meditative class; a visit of Joseph Scaliger to Montaigne, the latter a personage for whom Landor entertained a peculiar sympathy and admiration; and among the ancients a remonstrance of the poet Anacreon with the tyrant Polycrates, a contrast of the true stoic Epictetus with the false stoic Seneca, and a second conversation of Demosthenes and Eubulides. Himself Landor introduced as conversing with an English and a Florentine visitor on the death and the virtues of the Grand Duke Ferdinand

of Tuscany, on politics and poetry, and especially on the fates and genius of Keats and Shelley.

If anything could engage me to visit Rome again, to endure the sight of her scarred and awful ruins, telling their stories on the ground in the midst of bell-ringers and pantomimes; if I could let charnel-houses and opera-houses, consuls and popes, tribunes and cardinals, senatorial orators and preaching friars, clash in my mind; it would be that I might afterwards spend an hour in solitude, where the pyramid of Cestius stands against the wall, and points to the humbler tombs of Keats and Shelley.

* * * * * *

Keats, in his *Endymion*, is richer in imagery than either [Chaucer or Burns]: and there are passages in which no poet has arrived at the same excellence on the same ground. Time alone was wanting to complete a poet, who already far surpassed all his contemporaries in this country in the poet's most noble attributes. . . . . We will now return to Shelley. Innocent and careless as a boy, he possessed all the delicate feelings of a gentleman, all the discrimination of a scholar, and united, in just degrees, the ardour of the poet with the patience and forbearance of the philosopher. His generosity and charity went far beyond those of any man (I believe) at present in existence. He was never known to speak evil of an enemy, unless that enemy had done some grievous injustice to another: and he divided his income of only one thousand pounds with the fallen and afflicted.

After expressing his deep regret at the misunderstanding which had kept them strangers, Landor concludes:—

As to what remains of him now life is over, he occupies the third place among the poets of the present age, and is incomparably the most elegant, graceful, and harmonious of the prose writers.

Landor's implied order among the poets in the above words is, strange as it may seem, Southey, Wordsworth,

Shelley. Republishing the conversation twenty years later, he varies the last words as follows :—

"He occupies, if not the highest, almost the highest, place among our poets of the present age; no humble station; and is among the most elegant, graceful, and harmonious of the prose writers."

With reference to his own position among his fellow-writers, Landor is as totally and cordially free from jealousy as it is possible for a man to be. At the same time he has no doubts; and the text or notes of these personal dialogues occasionally contain a remark in the following stately key,—"What I write is not written on slate, and no finger, not of Time himself, who dips it in the clouds of years, can efface it;" and occasionally a derisive challenge to his reviewers,—let the sturdiest of them take the ten worst of his dialogues, "and if he equals them in ten years I will give him a hot wheaten roll and a pint of brown stout for breakfast."

Landor panted for the immediate publication of his new edition, but was again foiled by his own impetuosity. Some want of tact in a letter of Taylor's, some slight delays of payment and correspondence on his part, together with the irritation Landor had not unnaturally felt under his timorous censorship, led to an outbreak which made all future relations between them impossible. Landor's annoyance and his suspicions having been inflamed in the course of conversation with Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, his imagination swiftly added fuel to the fire, and he presently exploded, writing to accuse Taylor of every kind of misconduct, and proclaiming every kind of desperate resolution in consequence. "His first villainy instigated me to throw my fourth volume, in its imperfect state, into the fire, and has cost me nine-tenths of my fame as a writer.

His next villainy will entail perhaps a chancery suit on my children—for at its commencement I blow my brains out. This cures me for ever, if I live, of writing what could be published; and I will take good care that my son shall not suffer in the same way. Not a line of any kind will I leave behind me. My children shall be carefully warned against literature." Was ever ancient Roman so forgetful of himself? Was ever overgrown schoolboy so incorrigible?

Landor's "for ever" rarely lasted more than a few weeks, and it is to his credit that when Julius Hare replied to all this with a perfectly manly and straightforward letter of remonstrance, justifying his friend Taylor in all but a few unimportant particulars, Landor received the rebuke in silence, and continued to entrust to Hare the farther arrangements concerning his book. The materials intended for his fourth volume he had, as we have just read, destroyed. But within a few months more he had produced new dialogues enough not only for one, but for two, additional volumes, and in the meantime another publisher had been found in the person of Colburn. Landor's share of the profits on his first edition had been a hundred and seventy pounds odd. For the second edition he received in advance two hundred pounds. Its first two volumes appeared in 1826; the third, the new volume, dedicated to Bolivar, not until 1828, and these three volumes were now regarded as constituting the "first series" of the work. Some fresh slight disagreements having arisen, the fourth and fifth volumes, comprising the "second series," were entrusted to yet another publisher, Duncan, and appeared in 1829. These two new volumes contain between them twenty-seven more dialogues of the old diversified character. That of Lucullus

and Cæsar is the loftiest, most thoughtful, and urbane, next to that of the two Ciceros, among the more tranquil of Landor's Roman dialogues. The conversation of Diogenes and Plato, allowing for the peculiar view which Landor had formed of Plato's character and genius, is at once the most pungent and the most majestic of the Greek. In the dialogue of Metellus and Marius at the walls of Numantia, Landor embodies with masterly imagination the inexorable spirit of Roman conquest; in that of Leofric and Godiva the charm of bridal tenderness and the invincibility of womanly compassion; in that of Lady Lisle and Lady Elizabeth Gaunt, condemned to death during the bloody assize for sheltering the partisans of Monmouth, the constancy of martyrdom and the divine persistence of more than Christian forgiveness. Landor's own favourite conversation of all was that in which the philosopher Epicurus instructs at once in wisdom and in dalliance his girl-pupils Leontion and Ternissa. A scarcely less ideal charm is breathed by Landor over the relations of his own contemporary Trelawny with the daughter of the Klepht leader Odysseus, in the introduction of a dialogue which turns afterwards on the discussion of European, and especially of Greek, politics. In a short scene between Peleus and Thetis he unites with the full charm of Hellenic mythology the full vividness of human passion. Satirical conversations between the French ministers Villèle and Corbière, the English Pitt and Canning, and the Portuguese Prince Miguel and his mother, give vent more or less felicitously to his illimitable contempt for the ministers and ruling families of modern states.

Besides the contents of these five volumes, written and published between the years 1821 and 1829, and containing in all about eighty *Conversations*, Landor had before

the latter date written some twenty more, which he intended for publication in a sixth. But from one reason and another this sixth volume never appeared, and the materials which should have composed it were for the most part only made public in the collected edition of Landor's writings issued in 1846. Counting these, and the increase in the number of the original dialogues effected by dividing some of them into two, and adding those which he wrote afterwards at intervals until the year of his death, the total number of *Imaginary Conversations* left by Landor amounts to just short of a hundred and fifty.

Those written in the eight years now under review include, therefore, about two-thirds of the whole. We have seen with what ardour and facility, and with what a miscellaneous selection of speakers and of topics, they were produced. Their range extends over the greater part of life, literature, and history. Landor himself, and his editors after him, devised in the sequel various modes of grouping and classifying them; but none of these classifications are satisfactory. *Conversations of the Greeks and Romans* form, indeed, one distinct historical division, but not a division on which it is desirable to insist. It has often been said of Landor that he wrote of the Greeks more like a Greek, and of the Romans more like a Roman, than any other modern, and the saying in my judgment is true. But his treatment of other themes is not different in kind from his treatment of these, and he has not been better inspired by the romance and the example of antiquity, than by the charm of Italy, or the glory of England. The original title of the two first volumes, *Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen*, by no means covered the whole of their contents; and the edi-

torial divisions afterwards established by Mr. Forster, viz., *Greeks and Romans*, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, *Literary Men*, *Famous Women*, and *Miscellaneous*, cross and overlap each other in many directions. To my mind the only vital and satisfactory division between one class and another of Landor's prose conversations is that between the dramatic and the non-dramatic; the words are inexact, and the distinction is far from being sharp or absolute; but what I mean is this, that some of the compositions in question are full of action, character, and passion, and those I call the dramatic group; in others there is little action, and character and passion are replaced by disquisition and reflection, and those I call by contrast the non-dramatic. In the former class, Landor is in each case taken up with the creative task of realizing a heroic or pathetic situation, and keeps himself entirely in the background. In the latter class his energetic personality is apt to impose itself upon his speakers, who are often little more than masks behind which he retires in order to utter his own thoughts and opinions with the greater convenience and variety.

The dramatic conversations are mostly brief, and range over almost all periods of time. Central examples of the class are, from Roman antiquity, the dialogues of Marcellus and Hannibal, and of Tiberius and Vipsania; from the history or historic legend of England, those of Leofric and Godiva, of John of Gaunt and Joanna of Kent, of Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn, and of Lady Lisle and Lady Elizabeth Gaunt; from the history of France, those of Joan of Arc and Agnes Sorel, and of Bossuet and the Duchesse de Fontanges; from that of Italy, the interviews of Dante with Beatrice, and of Leonora di Este with Father Panigarola. In these and similar cases Landor

merely takes a motive suggested by history, being more apt to avoid than to make use of any actually recorded incident, and preferring to call up, not any scene which to our positive knowledge ever was, but only such a scene as might have been, enacted, the characters and circumstances being given. It is therefore from the imaginative and not from the literal point of view that his work is to be approached. His endeavour is to embody the spirit of historical epochs in scenes of which the actions and the emotions shall be at the same time new and just. In many instances his success is complete. The spirit, as I have already said, of Roman conquest stands typically fixed in a dialogue like that of Marius and Metellus; so does the spirit of Norman chivalry in one like that of Tancredi and Constantia; and of English honour in that of John of Gaunt and the Queen. In the actual dramatic conduct of the scenes, Landor in these short compositions shows a creative power and insight equal to that of the very greatest masters. Uniting the extreme of force to the extreme of tenderness, he pursues and seizes with convincing mastery the subtlest movements of impassioned feeling. Out of the nobility and tenderness of his own heart he imagines heights and delicacies of those qualities unmatched, as I cannot but think, by any English writer except Shakspeare. Pitching the emotions of his actors at an ideal height, his aim, we must farther remember, is to fix and embody them in an ideal cast of language; language of a perfection and a precision which no stress of feeling is allowed to impair or discompose. The emotion as thus embodied in words as it were of marble Landor leaves always as "naked" as possible, as much divested of accident and superfluity. Explanations and stage directions of all sorts the reader has to supply for himself, the author furnishing nothing of that nature

except what is to be inferred from the bare utterances of his speakers. At the same time we are aware that he has himself realized the action of every scene with perfect clearness. These high-strung dramatic dialogues used to cost Landor in the composition both throes and tears. As in the writing of *Count Julian* long ago, so now in that of *Tiberius and Vipsania*, he tells us how he watched and wept over his work by night, and how every feature and gesture of his personages stood visibly present before his mind's eye. But as in *Count Julian*, so now, he fails occasionally to take the reader with him. Want of instinctive sympathy with his reader is the weak point of Landor's lofty art, and in these dialogues he is so perfectly sure of his own way that he sometimes forgets to put into our hands the clue which we need in order to follow him. But usually nothing more is necessary than a little attention, a little deliberateness in reading—and work so full and rich is to be read attentively and deliberately if at all—in order to make all clear. The speeches as they succeed one another then become to us at the same time both monuments of the emotions of the actors, and landmarks indicating the crisis which their actions have reached; and we read between the lines how the heart-stricken Thetis has sunk through the embrace of Peleus; how the maidens in the house of Xanthus shrank one behind another in inquisitive awe at the beauty of Rhodope, the stranger slave from Phrygia; how Marius adventures and returns over blood and ashes within the walls of the beleaguered city of Numantia; how Zenobia is hurled by her despairing Rhadamistus into the eddies of the Araxes; how Godiva descends from her palfrey to kneel and pray when Leofric has sworn his cruel oath; how Dante for the last time rests his fevered head upon the

maiden bosom of Beatrice; how Anne Boleyn swoons at the unlooked-for entrance of her lord; or how the palace dog is heard lapping as it falls the blood of the murdered Czar.—Or sometimes the incidents are of another kind, and we realize with amusement how the venerable Bossuet bustles to pick up his ring lest the child-mistress of Louis XIV. should stoop for it; or how that monarch himself lets slip by inadvertence into his breeches the strip of silk which the same prelate and confessor has enjoined him to place next his skin by way of penance. For among the dialogues of this dramatic group some are comic, or at least satiric, branding the delinquencies of priests and kings in a vein of Aristophanic or Rabelaisian exaggeration. These however are seldom among Landor's best work, marble being not the most suitable material for caricature, nor weight and polish its most appropriate excellencies. In general it may be truly said of Landor that he rises or falls according to the nature of his subject, and is at his best only in the highest things. Especially is this true in his treatment of women. Both in the physical and the spiritual, Landor's feeling for the feminine is as strong as it is exquisite; there is no writer, Shakspeare alone once more excepted, who surpasses him in it. Hardly Perdita or Imogen themselves are made more beautiful to us by words than Landor's maiden image of Hope,—"her countenance was tinged with so delicate a colour that it appeared an effluence of an irradiated cloud passing over us in the heavens," or than his Greek Thelymnia in her crown of myrtle: "there was something in the tint of the tender sprays resembling that of the hair they encircled; the blossoms too were white as her forehead." Hardly Imogen again, hardly Cordelia, hardly Desdemona, are more nobly realized types of con-

stancy and sweetness, of womanly heroism and womanly resignation, than are Landor's Joan of Arc or his Anne Boleyn during the brief scenes in which they are brought before us. But there is one weak point in Landor's dealing with women which must not be overlooked. When he comes down from these heights, and deals with the every-day timidities of young love and simplicities of girlish feeling, he sometimes, it must be confessed, goes altogether astray, and strikes the note of false innocence and flirting "archness." His young women, including the Greek, are on these occasions apt to say "audacious!" "you must be a very bold man!" "put me down!" and generally to comport themselves in a manner giggly, missish, and disconcerting.

To give the reader a just idea of Landor's manner in this class of his *Conversations*, it would be desirable to set before him at least two examples, one to illustrate the extreme of his strength, the other of his delicacy, in dramatic imagination. Space failing for this, let us detach an example of an intermediate kind from a dialogue to which allusion has several times been made already, that of *Leofric and Godiva*, beginning at the point where the petitions of the tender-hearted bride begin to overbear her lord's obstinate resentment against his people.

Leofric. We must hold solemn festivals.

Godiva. We must indeed.

Leofric. Well then!

Godiva. Is the clamorousness that succeeds the death of God's dumb creatures, are crowded halls, are slaughtered cattle, festivals? Are maddenings songs and giddy dances, and hireling praises from party-coloured coats? Can the voice of a minstrel tell us better things of ourselves, than our own internal one might tell us? or can his breath make our breath softer in sleep? O my beloved! let everything be a joyance to us: it will, if we will. Sad is the day, and worse must follow,

when we hear the blackbird in the garden and do not throb with joy. But Leofric, the high festival is strewn by the servant of God upon the heart of man. It is gladness, it is thanksgiving, it is the orphan, the starveling prest to the bosom, and bidden as its first commandment to remember its benefactor. We will hold this festival; the guests are ready: we may keep it up for weeks and months and years together, and always be the happier and the richer for it. The beverage of this feast, O Leofric, is sweeter than bee or flower or vine can give us: it flows from heaven; and in heaven will it again be poured out abundantly to him, who pours it out here abundantly.

Leofric. Thou art wild.

Godiva. I have indeed lost myself; the words are not mine: I only feel and utter them. Some Power, some good, kind Power melts me (body and soul and voice) into tenderness and love. O my husband, we must obey it. Look upon me! look upon me! lift again your sweet eyes from the ground! I will not cease to supplicate; I dare not.

Leofric. We will think upon it.

Godiva. O never say that word! those who utter it are false men. What! think upon goodness when you can be good! Let not their infants cry for food! the mother of our blessed Lord will hear them; us never afterward.

Leofric. Here comes the bishop: we are now but one mile from the walls. Why dismountest thou? no bishop can expect it. Godiva, my honour and rank among men are humbled by this: Earl Godwin will hear of it: up! up! the bishop hath seen it: he urgeth his horse onward: dost thou not hear him now upon the solid turf behind thee?

Godiva. Never, no, never, will I rise, O Leofric, until you remit this most impious tax, this tax on hard labour, on hard life.

Leofric. Turn round: look how the fat nag canters, as to the tune of a sinner's psalm, slow and hard-breathing. . . . What reason or right can the people have to complain, while their bishop's steed is so sleek and well caparisoned? Inclination to change, desire to abolish old usages. . . . Rise, up for

shame! they shall smart for it, idlers. Sir bishop, I must blush for my young bride.

Godiva. My husband, my husband! will you pardon the city?

Leofric. O, sir bishop! I could not think you would have seen her in this plight. Will I pardon? yea, Godiva, by the holy rood, will I pardon the city, when thou ridest naked at noontide through the streets.

Godiva. O my dear, cruel Leofric, where is the heart you gave me? It was not so! Can mine have hardened it?

Bishop. Earl, thou abashest thy spouse; she turneth pale and weepeth. Lady Godiva, peace be with thee.

Godiva. Thanks, holy man! peace will be with me when peace is with your city. Did you hear my lord's hard word?

Bishop. I did, lady.

Godiva. Will you remember it, and pray against it?

Bishop. Wilt thou forget it?

Godiva. I am not offended.

Bishop. Angel of peace and purity!

Godiva. But treasure it up in your heart. Deem it an incense; good only when it is consumed and spent, ascending with prayer and sacrifice. And now what was it?

Bishop. Christ save us! that he will pardon the city when thou ridest naked through the streets at noon.

Godiva. Did he not swear an oath?

Bishop. He sware by the holy rood.

Godiva. My Redeemer! thou hast heard it! save the city!

Leofric. We are upon the beginning of the pavement: these are the suburbs: let us think of feasting: we may pray afterward: to-morrow we shall rest.

Godiva. No judgments then to-morrow, Leofric?

Leofric. None: we will carouse.

Godiva. The saints of heaven have given me strength and confidence: my prayers are heard: the heart of my beloved is now softened.

Leofric. Ay, ay.

Godiva. Say, dearest Leofric, is there indeed no other hope, no other mediation?

Leofric. I have sworn. Besides, thou hast made me redden and turn my face away from thee, and all these knaves have seen it. This adds to the city's crime.

Godiva. I have blushed, too, Leofric, and was not rash nor cruel.

Leofric. But thou, my sweetest, art given to blushing; there is no conquering it in thee. I wish thou hadst not alighted so hastily and roughly: it hath shaken down a sheaf of thy hair: take heed not to sit upon it, lest it anguish thee. Well done! it mingleth now sweetly with the cloth of gold upon the saddle, running here and there, as if it had life and faculties and business, and were working thereupon some newer and cunninger device. O my beauteous Eve! there is a paradise about thee! the world is refreshed as thou movest and breathest on it. . . . I cannot see or think of evil where thou art. I would throw my arms even here about thee. . . . . No signs for me! no shaking of sunbeams! no reproof or frown or wonderment. . . . . I *will* say it. . . now then for worse. . . . . I would close with my kisses thy half-open lips, ay, and those lovely and loving eyes, before the people.

Godiva. To-morrow you shall kiss me, and they shall bless you for it. I shall be very pale, for to-night I must fast and pray.

Leofric. I do not hear thee; the voices of the folks are so low under this archway.

Godiva (to herself). God help them! good kind souls! I hope they will not crowd about me so to-morrow. O Leofric! could my name be forgotten! and yours alone remembered. But perhaps my innocence may save me from reproach . . . . and how many as innocent are in fear and famine! No eye will open on me but fresh from tears. What a young mother for so large a family! Shall my youth harm me? Under God's hand it gives me courage. Ah, when will the morning come? ah, when will the noon be over?

The second class of Landor's dialogues, the dialogues of discussion and reflection, are both much more numerous, and individually for the most part much longer, than

those of which I have thus far spoken. They also range over almost the whole field of history, and include several of the satiric kind, in which modern statesmen are generally the speakers. The description non-dramatic must not be taken too strictly, inasmuch as Landor often introduces and concludes a purely discursive and reflective dialogue with passages of pleasant intercourse and play of feeling, and sometimes enlivens the whole course of the discussion with such accompaniments. Or again, he grasps and realizes in a way that may fairly be called dramatic, whether it coincides with our historical ideas or not, the character of this or that individual speaker. But at least as often either one of the speakers or both are mere mouthpieces for the utterance of Landor's own thoughts and sentiments. He expressly warns his readers, indeed, against taking for his own any of the opinions put into the mouths of his personages; but the reader familiar with Landor's other writings and with his correspondence will have no difficulty in recognizing where the living man expresses himself behind the historic mask. Thus we know that it is Landor himself who is contending for toleration and open-mindedness in matters of religious faith, alike in the person of Lucian and in that of Melanchthon; for simplicity and integrity of thought and speech in those of Diogenes and of Epictetus. It is Landor who transports himself in imagination into the gardens of Epicurus, and holds delightful converse with Leontion and Ternissa; it is Landor who through the mouths of Anacreon and of the priest of Ammon rebukes the ambition of Polycrates and of Alexander. Landor behind the mask of Andrew Marvel glorifies against the time-serving archbishop the great poet of the English republic, and Landor dictates the true policy of his country through the

lips of the Greek or Spanish revolutionary leaders. It is the greatest tribute to the range of his powers and of his knowledge that he could adapt his thoughts to so great a diversity of ages and characters without too obvious a forfeiture of verisimilitude in any given case.

Landor's whole treatment of Plato is very characteristic of his way of thinking and working. He would accept no secondhand verdict in matters either of literature or life; and when he had examined any matter for himself, was none the worse pleased if he found his judgment running counter to the received opinion. Although theoretically he disliked and despised paradox, he was certainly "well content," as Emerson puts it, "to impress his English whim upon the immutable past," and to refashion ancient glories in a mould of his own construction. At Florence he went, he tells us, every morning for a long while to the Magliabecchian Library, and read the whole works of Plato through. Considering what the works of Plato are, and that Landor was by no means a perfectly accomplished Greek scholar, it is evident that his reading must have been perfunctory. But it was enough to inspire him with a great distaste, and a considerable portion of contempt, for that illustrious author. Landor was never blind to genius, but in the genius of Plato he saw and noted little except the flaws and singularities. He has carefully collected, apart from their connexion, examples of everything that is practically unreasonable in Plato's views of civil government; of everything that is fantastic in his allegories, captious in his reasonings, and ambiguous or redundant in his diction. He has made Plato cut a figure both pretentious and ridiculous in his intercourse with Diogenes, who lectures him on style and on morals, reproves his want of simplicity and independence, discharges at him a

whole artillery of wise and beautiful sayings in Landor's own finest manner, and even knocks out of his hand his especial weapons of poetical eloquence, outdoing him with a passage of splendid rhetoric on the nothingness and restlessness of human power as compared with the power of the gentlest of the elements, the air. Neither is Landor content with this discomfiture of Plato at the hands of his contemporary philosopher of the tub; he returns to the charge where we should least have expected it, and in a dialogue of Lord Chatham with Lord Chesterfield makes the great statesman turn the conversation on ancient philosophy, and edify his visitor with an exposition of the faults and fallacies which he has found in Plato. This unexpectedness, which is yet not the same thing as paradox, this preference for, and habit of lighting on, the thing *indictum ore alio*, is an essential part of Landor's genius.

To return to the general character of these *Conversations*, their weakness lies in Landor's inaptitude alike for close or sustained reasoning, and for stirring or rapid narrative; his characters seldom attempt argument, and almost as often as they attempt story-telling, they fail. The true strength of the discursive *Conversations* resides in the extraordinary richness, the originality and meditative depth and insight of the reflexions scattered through them—reflexions generally clenched and illuminated by images, and adding the quality of beauty to the qualities of solid ingenuity or wisdom. Some of the dialogues are filled almost from beginning to end with such reflexions. In some they are few and far between. Sometimes they are set in a framework of graceful incident, and amidst beautiful magnanimities and urbanities of intercourse; sometimes they have to be sought out

through a maze of more or less tedious disquisitions, confused anecdotes, and unsuccessful witticisms. Occasionally Landor spoils an otherwise admirable dialogue of antiquity by intruding into it a sarcastic apologue against some object of his political aversion in the modern world. Occasionally he makes his personages discuss with much fulness and rotundity of speech questions of learning and of curiosity that can be interesting only to himself; in a word he does that which he was so keenly sensible of Wordsworth's mistake in allowing himself to do—he drones. It is a classical and from the point of view of style an exemplary form of droning, but it is droning still. To the lover of fine thoughts there is not one of these dialogues which it is not worth his while to read through and through for the sake of the jewels it contains. But there are not many which, like the dialogues of Diogenes and Plato, of the two Ciceros, of Marvel and Archbishop Parker, he can recommend to the ordinarily intelligent reader in the confidence that he will not be fatigued before the end. It should be said, however, that the appetite for Landor always grows with the reading. The mansions of his mind are so various, and the riches treasured up in them so vast, that if they contain some chill and musty corridors we may well be content to traverse these too with patience. When Landor is good he is so admirably and so originally good, so full of crushing and massive force on one page, and of a delicacy surpassing that of the tenderest poets on another, that to know him well repays tenfold whatever hours of weariness his weak places cost. He never emphasizes or separates his own good sayings, but delivers himself of his best and of his worst with the same composure and completeness.

During these eight years of sustained and on the whole

victorious literary effort, the outward life of Landor had not failed to exhibit the usual contrasts between his doctrine and his practice. The author of the maxim "neither to give nor to take offence is surely the best thing in life," had been taking and giving offence as superfluously as ever. We have already witnessed the bursting of two storms in the course of his relations with his publishers; others had gathered nearer home. Landor had found or invented cause of dudgeon against members both of the English embassy and of the native magistrature at Florence. He had, it is said, challenged a secretary of legation for whistling in the street when Mrs. Landor passed, and had written a formal complaint to the Foreign Office concerning the character of "the wretches they employed abroad." He had persuaded himself that he was a man marked out for petty persecution by the agents of authority both in Italy and England. He was on terms of permanent misunderstanding with the police. Some of the expressions and anecdotes concerning Florentine society which he had introduced into one of his first Conversations had been translated, and had further helped to plunge him in hot water. With his lofty standards of honour and veracity, of independence and decorum, he had indeed conceived a sovereign contempt for the character, if not of the Italian people in general, at any rate of the city population in the midst of which he lived. His arbitrary indignations and eccentricities made him seem to them on his part the most ideally mad of all mad Englishmen. His residence at the Medici palace was brought to an untimely end by a quarrel with his landlord, a marquis bearing the historic name of the house. Landor imagined that this marquis had unfairly seduced away his coachman, and wrote to complain accordingly. The next day the marquis came

strutting with his hat on into the room where Mrs. Landor was sitting with some visitors. "He had scarcely," writes one of these, "advanced three steps from the door, when Landor walked up to him quickly, and knocked his hat off, then took him by the arm and turned him out. You should have heard Landor's shout of laughter at his own anger, when it was all over; inextinguishable laughter, which none of us could resist." Incidents of this kind, however, were too frequent in Landor's life to affect him very deeply. His wrath usually exhaled itself either in a fit of laughter or an epigram—if anything so solid as a Landorian epigram can justly be called an exhalation. At worst a quarrel would sometimes give him a bilious attack, or aggravate the annual fit of quinsy to which he had by this time become subject.

Domestic and social consolations were not wanting to Landor in these days. His conjugal relations continued to be for some time endurable, if far from ideal; while in his children, the fourth and last of whom was born in 1825, he took a constantly increasing delight. He loved and cherished them with a passionate, almost an animal-intensity of affection. In their games *Babbo* was one of themselves, the most gleeful and the most riotous of playmates. He could not bear to be parted from them, and went half beside himself with anxiety when during a visit to Naples he heard that some of them were down with a childish illness. In his letters to his sisters and his mother at home, he made those kindly hearts the participators in his parental delights. This home correspondence of Landor's never flagged during his mother's life. He wrote to her about his doings and about the children, and she replied from Warwick or Ipsley with all the gossip of the county. Knowing his aversion for business, she did not

trouble him much with details of his property or accounts, but was full of plans for his future and that of his children. She hoped that when she was gone he would come home and settle down to the life of an English country gentleman, and that he would get as much enjoyment out of Ipsley as she had herself got all her life. She hoped, and it was Landor's error and misfortune in this to have neglected her advice, that he would send his sons home to England to be educated. His bent towards literature Landor had not indeed, like many men of genius, derived from his mother. She looked upon his exertions in this kind with a vague respect not unmingled with alarm. In thanking him for a copy of his Latin poetry which he had sent her, she had said it was pronounced by the learned to be very delightful, "but one cannot read it, to understand it, oneself." And now, when she heard of the *Imaginary Conversations*, she only hoped he was not injuring his health by too much work. "For God's sake do not hurt your eyes, nor rack your brains too much, to amuse the world by writing. But take care of your health, which will be of greater use to your family."

To his other occupations Landor began to add soon after his arrival at Florence that of a picture collector. He formed his own taste and his own opinions in connoisseurship as in other things, and acted on them with his usual confidence and precipitancy. He anticipated the modern predilection for the pre-Raphaelite masters, whose pictures were then in no demand. Of the works of these and other schools an almost incredible number, some good, but according to skilled evidence the greater part bad or indifferent, passed through Landor's hands in the course of the next fifteen years. He liked the rooms in which he lived to be denuded of nearly all furniture

except pictures, with which their walls were covered from floor to ceiling. He was a great giver, and fond, especially in later years, of sending away a guest the richer for a token in the shape of a picture from his walls. Always disinclined to general society, and particularly to official society, he found in Florence as much companionship as he desired of the sort that suited him best. Among the residents, his chief associates were Mr. Seymour Kirkup, then and for half a century afterwards a central figure of the English colony in the city; Charles Armitage Brown, the friend and comrade of Keats; and a Mr. Leckie, whose company is said to have been more joyous than decorous, and more welcome to Landor than to his wife. Francis Hare, too, was often in Florence, and when he and Landor were together, the encounter of wits ran high. Both were men of amazing knowledge and amazing memory; their self-confidence was about equal. Landor was in intercourse of this kind the more urbane and forbearing of the two, Hare the more overpoweringly brilliant and impetuous. They disputed often, but never quarrelled; and remained faithful friends to the last. Landor's letters to Hare during his absence are as full as those to Southey of the varied matter of his thoughts, set forth in his energetic, disconnected way, and often containing germs which we find developed in the *Conversations* of the time.

After the appearance of the first two volumes of his *Conversations* Landor was habitually sought out, as a man of acknowledged genius and fame, by the more distinguished of the English who came to Florence. He seldom accepted dinners or other invitations, but received in his own house those visitors who brought him introductions. One day Hogg, the friend of Shelley, was announced while Hare was sitting in the room. Landor said that he felt himself

like La Fontaine with all the better company of the beasts about him. Hogg was delighted with his interview, and wrote afterwards that if he wished to procure any one for whom he cared a real benefit, it would be the friendship of Walter Savage Landor. In 1825 came Leigh Hunt. In his short-lived paper, the *Liberal*, Byron's *Vision of Judgment* with its preface had been published three years before, but he had lately made his *amende*, as he tells us, to Landor, with whom he was always thenceforward on good terms.

Soon afterwards came Hazlitt; who brought no introduction, but said he would beard the lion in his den, "and walked up to his house," says Mr. Kirkup, "one winter's morning in nankeen shorts and white stockings, was made much of by the royal animal, and often returned at night, for Landor was much out in the day, in all weathers." Of their conversations one is recorded in which Hazlitt expounded to his breathless and, as it seemed, envious host, the simple process by which, under the Scotch law, he had been enabled to get himself divorced by consent from his wife; and another in which, on Landor saying that he had never seen Wordsworth, Hazlitt asked, "But you have seen a horse, I suppose?" and being answered yes, continued, "Well, sir, if you have seen a horse, I mean his head, sir, you may say you have seen Wordsworth, sir." But the visitors with whom Landor formed at this time the closest and most permanent friendship were not Hunt or Hazlitt, but the Irish nobleman and his gifted wife who, with the French Apollo who had lately attached himself to their household, was making at this time his memorable Italian tour. Lord Blessington had been known long ago to Landor as Lord Mountjoy, and when he came to Florence made haste to renew their acquaintance. In his

wife, the fascinating daughter of a ruffianly Irish squireen, married at fourteen to a ruffianly English officer, and again, after some years of widowhood, to this amiable, cultivated, sumptuous, gouty, reformed *roué* of an Irish peer—in Lady Blessington, Landor found the most appreciative and most constant of friends. Of all the celebrities of her acquaintance, and that means of all who were living in her day, Landor was the one for whom she conceived from the first, and retained until her death, the warmest attachment and respect. She thought him the most genuinely polite man in Europe, and it was a point upon which she had a right to speak. With Lord Blessington and Count D'Orsay Landor became almost as fast friends as with my Lady, and he spent most of the evenings of one whole summer, and two a week of the next, in the enjoyment of their society in the beautiful Casa Pelosi, the villa which they occupied on the Lung' Arno. In 1827 the Blessingtons persuaded him to join them in a yachting trip to Naples; but as on a former trip with Hare to Rome, so again now Landor's pleasure was marred by his feverish anxiety on account of his children. It was on the former of these expeditions that Landor had received the first childish letter from his son Arnold, and had ended his own answer with the words, —

> I shall never be quite happy until I see you again and put my cheek upon your head. Tell my sweet Julia, that if I see twenty little girls I will not romp with any of them before I romp with her, and kiss your two dear brothers for me. You must always love them as much as I love you, and you must teach them how to be good boys, which I cannot do so well as you can. God preserve and bless you, my own Arnold. My heart beats as if it would fly to you, my own fierce creature. We shall very soon meet; love your BABBO.

In 1827 there came to the Villa Castiglione another

visitor, with whom Landor formed an immediate friendship. This was Mr. Ablett of Llandbedr, a Welsh gentleman of fortune and literary tastes, who conceived an enthusiasm for Landor's genius and his person, commissioned a bust of him by Gibson, and a year afterwards, Landor being then looking out for a new place of abode, and desiring one in the country near Florence, came forward to furnish him the means of securing for himself a home that seemed the ideal of his dreams. This was the Villa Gherardesca, a fine and ancient house, surrounded with a considerable extent of farm and garden, on a height a little below Fiesole, to the right hand of the road ascending to that city from Florence. By the beauty of its prospect and the charm of its associations, this site was for Landor the choicest that could be found. His favourite of all Italian authors, his favourite, indeed, of all in the world after Shakspeare, Milton, and the ancients, was Boccaccio. The Valley of Ladies, described in the most enchanting passage of the *Decameron*, lies within the grounds of the Villa Gherardesca, and the twin streams of Affrico and Mensola, celebrated in the *Ninfale*, run through them. The price of this enviable property so far exceeded any means immediately at Landor's disposal, that he had never even thought of becoming its purchaser. But Mr. Ablett insisted on advancing the required amount. He would take no interest, and Landor was after some years able to repay the capital of the loan out of the yearly savings on his income. It was in 1829 that he removed with his family into their new home.

CHAPTER VI.

FIESOLE AND ENGLAND—THE EXAMINATION OF SHAKSPEARE —PERICLES AND ASPASIA—THE PENTAMERON. (1829—1837.)

THE years spent by Landor in his villa at Fiesole seem on the whole to have been the happiest in his life. His children were not yet of the age when the joy which children give either ceases or is transformed; they were still his rapturously loved playmates; and the farm and gardens of the villa made the rarest of playgrounds. Father and children alike found endless occupation and pastime in delving, planting, clearing, gardening, and the keeping of pets. For the first time since he went abroad Landor's love of animals had now full play. Besides the great house-dog Parigi, we hear of the cat Cincirillo, and the difficulty of keeping him from the birds; of a tame marten, for whom when he died his master composed a feeling epitaph; a tame leveret, and all manner of other pets. The place was as beautiful and fertile as it was rich in associations. From amid the clouds of olive and spires of cypress within his gates, Landor loved to look down to right and left along the sweep of Valdarno, or away towards the distant woods of Vallombrosa, or the misty ridges above Arezzo; he loved at sunset to watch

all the hills of Tuscany turning to amethyst beneath those skies of pearl.

> Let me sit down and muse by thee
> Awhile, aerial Fiesole,

he wrote; and even while he found his new home the best, his thoughts went back with affection to that which he had left in Wales.

> Llanthony! an ungenial clime,
> And the broad wing of restless Time,
> Have rudely swept thy mossy walls
> And rockt thy abbots in their palls.
> I loved thee by thy streams of yore,
> By distant streams I love thee more.

To his friend Francis Hare, who had married not long before, Landor writes:—

. . . . Did I tell you I have bought a place in the country, near Fiesole? I shall say no more about it to you, but try whether Mrs. H. will not bring you to see it in the spring.

DEAR MRS. HARE,—Do then conduct your slave, of whom I dare say you are prouder than ever Zenobia would have been if she had taken Aurelian, back again to Florence.—No, not to Florence, but to Fiesole. Be it known, I am master of the very place to which the greatest genius of Italy, or the Continent, conducted those ladies who told such pleasant tales in the warm weather, and the very scene of his Ninfale. Poor Affrico, for some misconduct, has been confined within stone walls. There no longer is lake or river, but a little canal. The place, however, is very delightful, and I have grapes, figs, and a nightingale—all at your service, but you cannot be treated with all on the same day.

To his sisters Landor writes with more detail and more enthusiasm. He tells the whole story of Mr. Ablett's unexpected kindness. "It is true his fortune is very large; but if others equal him in fortune, no human being

ever equalled him in generosity." Landor goes on to describe the house, the size and arrangement of the rooms, the views, the two gardens, one with a fountain, the conservatories for lemons and oranges. He tells too of the cypresses, vines, roses, arbutuses, bays, and French fruit-trees which he is planting; of the wholesomeness of the soil and climate. "I have the best water, the best air, and the best oil in the world. My country now is Italy, where I have a residence for life, and literally may sit under my own vine and my own fig-tree. I have some thousands of the one and some scores of the other, with myrtles, pomegranates, gagias, and mimosas in great quantity. I intend to make a garden not very unlike yours at Warwick; but alas! time is wanting. I may live another ten years, but do not expect it. In a few days, whenever the weather will allow it, I have four mimosas ready to place round my tomb, and a friend who is coming to plant them." The friend here in question is no other than Landor's old love Ianthè, who to his delight had reappeared about this time in Florence. Her first husband had died within a year of Landor's own ill-starred marriage. She had now lately buried her second, and was the object of the addresses at the same time of a French duke and an English earl; neither of which were ultimately accepted. The course of her own and Landor's lives brought them across one another's path once and again before her death. Those who saw them in company have described the tender and assiduous homage which marked his bearing to her above all other women, and his allusions to her in prose and verse show that she never ceased to be the ideal of his inward thoughts.

The letter just quoted was written on New Year's Day, 1830. A few weeks before, Landor had lost his mother.

That kind, just, and in her own way most shrewd and capable old lady, had been failing since the spring of 1829, and had died in October at the close of her eighty-fifth year. "My mother's great kindness to me," writes Landor "throughout the whole course of her life made me perpetually think of her with the tenderest love. I am not sorry that she left me some token of her regard; but she gave me too many in her lifetime for me to think of taking any now." So Landor asks his sisters to keep the little legacies which his mother had left him. What is more, he insists on their continuing to have the enjoyment of Ipsley, and declines to allow the place to be let or its contents to be sold for his own benefit. For the rest, the tenour of Landor's life was little changed. His thoughts were as much his companions as ever. He was to be met at all seasons rambling alone, in old clothes and battered straw hat, upon the heights round Fiesole, and audibly, like Wordsworth "booing" about the hills of Cumberland, repeating to himself the masterpieces that he loved, or trying and balancing the clauses and periods of his own stately prose. He was constantly adding to and filling out his *Imaginary Conversations*. One or two pieces which he had first conceived in this form grew during those Fiesolan days, as we shall see by-and-by, to the proportions of independent books. But the first book which Landor published after he came to Fiesole was one not of prose conversations, but of poetry. He had been long urged by Francis Hare to bring out a revised selection from his early poems, which at present only existed in volumes so rare that it was almost impossible any longer to procure them. After some years of hesitation the project was at last carried out, and the result appeared in 1831, in the shape of a volume dedicated to Hare himself, and

containing reprints of *Gebir*, of *Count Julian*, of some pieces chosen from the *Simonidea* and other earlier collections, besides a few things which were now printed for the first time. From *Gebir*, as now and afterwards republished, Landor cut out all passages implying praise of Buonaparte or of revolutionary France. Following *Count Julian*, he printed three dramatic fragments of which he had sent the manuscript to Southey from Pisa ten years before; two on the Spanish subject of Ines de Castro and Don Pedro; one, under the title *Ippolito di Este*, containing some recovered or rewritten fragments of the tragedy burnt long ago at Llanthony. Then followed the Icelandic tale of *Gunlang* from the collection of 1805. Between the love-pieces and the elegies selected from the *Simonidea* came a number of miscellaneous poems, some old and some new. Landor showed that his wrath against his Welsh persecutors had not even yet subsided by printing a long and laboured set of Hudibrastics written at the time against the adverse counsel Taunton. Much better to read, perhaps indeed the best of all Landor's short poems in the quality of deliberate, delicate, meditative description, is the *Fæsulan Idyl*, from which we have already quoted the admirable lines relating to the love of flowers.

All naturally was not idyllic, nor all peaceable, in Landor's new life. Having been robbed of some plate at the time when he was taking possession of his villa, he applied to the police, assuring them at the same time of his profound conviction of their corruptness and incompetence. Thereupon, apparently to his surprise, their feelings rose, and the quarrel very soon reached such a pitch that Landor was ordered to leave Tuscany, and did actually retreat as far as Lucca. Hence he wrote a fine courteous letter to the

Grand Duke in person, who took the whole matter pleasantly; and Lord Normanby, Sir Robert Lawley, and other friends interceding, the order of expulsion was tacitly regarded as a dead letter, and Landor came back in triumph. Very soon afterwards he was deep in a quarrel with a French neighbour of his own at Fiesole, a M. Antoir, living on a property of which the tenant had a customary right to the surplus water from the fountain of the Villa Gherardesca. The watering of Landor's flowers and shrubberies, and the English prodigality of the family in the matter of bathing, and the washing of stables, kennels, and cages, reduced this surplus to practically nothing. Hence a grievance, of course passionately resented. A duel between the disputants having been averted by the wisdom of Mr. Kirkup, whom Landor had chosen to be his second, there ensued a litigation which lasted for years; the case being tried and retried in all the courts of Tuscany.[1]

But these combative and explosive aspects of Landor's nature were much more rarely revealed in ordinary social intercourse than of old. The impression which he made during these years upon his favoured guests and visitors was one of noble geniality as well as of imposing force. A new, close, and joyous friendship formed by him in these days, and never dropped afterwards, was with Mr. Kenyon, the friend also of the Hares and of many of the most distinguished men of the next succeeding generation. He had during a part of his life at Fiesole a pleasant neighbour in the novelist G. P. R. James, to whom he afterwards made allusion as "my

[1] The pleas brought forward on Landor's side, before the court of final appeal, constitute a stout quarto pamphlet, in a hundred and twelve numbered paragraphs, dated 1841.

hearty Tory friend, Mr. James, whose *Mary of Burgundy* Scott himself (were he envious) might have envied." That zealous and open-minded cultivator of men of genius, Crabbe Robinson, already familiar with Southey and Wordsworth, came to Florence in the summer of 1830, and presented himself immediately at the Villa Gherardesca. "To Landor's society," writes Robinson, "I owed much of my highest enjoyment during my stay at Florence. He was a man of florid complexion, with large, full eyes, altogether a 'leonine' man, and with a fierceness of tone well suited to his name; his decisions being confident, and on all subjects, whether of taste or life, unqualified; each standing for itself, not caring whether it was in harmony with what had gone before or would follow from the same oracular lips. He was conscious of his own infirmity of temper, and told me he saw few persons, because he could not bear contradiction. Certainly, I frequently did contradict him; yet his attentions to me, both this and the following year, were unwearied." He tells elsewhere how Landor used to invite him to his villa constantly of evenings, and send him back always at night under escort of the dog Parigi, who understood his duty perfectly, and would attend the visitor as far as the city gates, and duly return by himself to the villa. Robinson's account is farther valuable as making us realize the mingled respect, amusement, and astonishment, with which Landor was regarded by his Italian neighbours and workpeople. "*Tutti gl'Inglesi sono pazzi, ma questo poi!*"—such, according to another witness, was the sentence in which their impressions were summed up. His passionate dealings with his fellow-creatures and his tenderness for the inanimate things of nature were in like manner typified in the local legend which represented him

as having once thrown his cook out of window, and instantly afterwards thrust out his head with the exclamation, "Good God, I forgot the violets."

In the early summer of 1832, at the urgent request of Mr. Ablett and of other friends, Landor left Fiesole on a visit to England. It was the first time he had been in his native country for eighteen years. His stay seems to have given almost unmixed pleasure both to himself and to those with whom he was brought in contact. He found his friend Madame de Molandé at Brighton, "in the midst of music, dancing, and fashionable people turned radicals. This amused me highly." The excitement concerning the passing of the reform bill was at that moment at its height: "The people are half mad about the king and the Tories." On a flying passage through London Landor was hospitably entertained by the friendly Robinson, who took him to see Flaxman one day, Charles Lamb another, and Coleridge a third. In his praise of Flaxman, the one living Englishman who shared, although not his scholarship, his natural affinity with the genius of Greece, Landor seemed to his companion wildly enthusiastic. With Lamb, whose life was then drawing to its close, and with his sister, Landor was no less delighted. Not so with Coleridge, although that philosopher put on a new suit of clothes in his honour, and made him as many pretty speeches as if he had been a young girl; but his talk was all about himself, and he displeased Landor by taking no notice of an enthusiastic mention of Southey. He next went to make at last the personal acquaintance of Julius Hare at Cambridge. It must have been at this time that Hare persuaded Landor to become a contributor to the *Philological Museum*, a periodical lately founded by himself and some other

Cambridge scholars. In it Landor published in this year a selection of pieces in Latin verse, including that charming address to his eldest son, of which mention has already been made above (p. 10). Next year followed in the same journal one of the stateliest and most diversified of Landor's classical dialogues, in which Scipio is found conversing with Panætius and Polybius beside the ruins of Carthage. The strength of Rome and the culture of Greece are celebrated with equal eloquence, and a tale, such as Landor loved, of perilously delightful converse between an elderly philosopher and a beautiful girl, is told in his peculiar vein of clear and captivating Greek grace, of ever appropriate but never foreseen or familiar imagery. Landor never long remembered any of his own writings after he had finished them, and it is to be regretted that he has weakened the originality of this admirable conversation by unconsciously introducing into it echoes and repetitions both from that of Epicurus and that of the two Ciceros.

From Cambridge Landor went to see his sisters at Warwick, and thence to stay with his benefactor Ablett, at his beautiful home of Llanbedr. The two friends went on together to pay flying visits to Southey and Wordsworth at the lakes. Upon Southey the renewal of personal converse with Landor left an impression altogether delightful, but in the intercourse of Landor with Wordsworth the seeds seem already to have been sown of that change of feeling on Landor's part which we shall have to notice by-and-by. For the present, however, their correspondence with and language concerning one another continued to be as cordial as ever. Towards the end of September Landor was back again in London. Immediately afterwards he set out on his way home, accompanied

by Julius Hare and another companion from Cambridge. This was Mr. Worsley, the present master of Downing. The three travelled by Belgium and the field of Waterloo, "an ugly table for an ugly game," as Landor calls it, and then up the Rhine. At Bonn Landor met W. Schlegel, and the aged poet and patriot Arndt. Of Schlegel he writes to Crabbe Robinson, "He resembles a little pot-bellied pony tricked out with stars, buckles, and ribbons, looking askance, from his ring and halter in the market, for an apple from one, a morsel of bread from another, a fig of ginger from a third, and a pat from everybody." His interview with the honest Arndt the next day had, however, "settled the bile this coxcomb of the bazaar had excited." In one of the very last pieces of verse Landor ever wrote I find him recalling with pleasure how he and Arndt had talked together in Latin thirty years before in the poet's orchard; how they had chanced to hear a song of Arndt's own sung by the people in the town below; and how nimbly the old poet had run and picked up an apple to give his guest, who had kept the pips and planted them in his garden at Fiesole. At Innsbrück Landor busied himself with seeking for memorials of the Tyrolese patriot Hofer, who had always been one of his favourite heroes. Travelling by the Tyrol to Venice, he sent home from that city for publication an account of what he had learnt, together with incidental observations on Waterloo and Napoleon, on liberty and Venice, which is one of his most striking pieces of high plain prose, at once impassioned and austere. By the beginning of 1833 Landor was back again among his children, his pet animals, and his pictures at Fiesole. He composed in memory of his visit to England three several odes; one to Ablett, in

which he coupled Southey and Wordsworth together in the lines,—

> Live Derwent's guest! and thou by Grasmere springs!
> Serene creators of immortal things,[1]—

and the other two addressed respectively to Southey and Wordsworth themselves. These odes contain as high-pitched lyrical writing as Landor ever attempted. Each of them has its fine lines and its felicities, but none of them is felicitous or excellent all through. Landor is in this kind of writing singularly unequal, starting often with a fine thought and a noble musical movement, and flagging and halting within a few lines. The ode to Wordsworth begins with a well-turned confession of Landor's own comparative amateurship in the art of poetry; its central portion is somewhat obscure; afterwards it falls into the lighter critical or colloquial vein of verse in which Landor was generally happy, and ends with one of the neatest and at the same time noblest of compliments.

> We both have run o'er half the space
> Listed for mortals' earthly race;

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[1] The original version of this *Ode to Ablett* was published in Leigh Hunt's *London Journal*, December 3, 1834. The lines quoted in the text were preceded by others alluding to the death of Coleridge,

> "Coleridge hath loost his shoe, or bathes in bliss
> Among the spirits that have power like his.

In a revised version sent a week or two later to Southey, these lines are changed to

> "Coleridge hath heard the call, and bathes in bliss
> Among the spirits that have power like his."

Several alterations were made afterwards, and as the ode was next printed in 1837, the allusion to Coleridge had disappeared altogether.

We both have crost life's fervid line,
And other stars before us shine:
May they be bright and prosperous
As those that have been stars for us!
Our course by Milton's light was sped,
And Shakspeare shining overhead:
Chatting on deck was Dryden too,
The Bacon of the rhyming crew;
None ever crost our mystic sea
More richly stored with thought than he;
Tho' never tender nor sublime,
He wrestles with and conquers Time.
To learn my lore on Chaucer's knee
I left much prouder company;
Thee gentle Spenser fondly led,
But me he mostly sent to bed.

I wish them every joy above
That highly blessed spirits prove,
Save one: and that too shall be theirs,
But after many rolling years,
When 'mid their light thy light appears.

A far more faultless and more distinguished example of Landor's verse, and one not less characteristic than those last quoted of his warm and generous appreciation of the works and characters of his brother writers, is the elegiac address to Mary Lamb on the death of her brother, which he wrote immediately upon hearing the news of that death in 1834.

Comfort thee, O thou mourner, yet awhile!
Again shall Elia's smile
Refresh thy heart, where heart can ache no more.
What is it we deplore?

He leaves behind him, freed from griefs and years,
Far worthier things than tears.
The love of friends without a single foe:
Unequalled lot below!

His gentle soul, his genius, these are thine;
For these dost thou repine?
He may have left the lowly walks of men;
Left them he has; what then?

Are not his footsteps followed by the eyes
Of all the good and wise?
Tho' the warm day is over, yet they seek
Upon the lofty peak

Of his pure mind the roseate light that glows
O'er death's perennial snows.
Behold him! from the region of the blest
He speaks: he bids thee rest.

Many months before this, he had been much affected in thinking over the deaths and misfortunes of distinguished men which had been happening round about him in quick succession. "What a dismal gap," he writes to Robinson, "has been made within a little time in the forest of intellect, among the plants of highest growth!" Then, after enumerating the deaths of Byron, Scott, Goethe, and Coleridge, he alludes to Southey's misfortune in his wife's decay of mind, and ends, "It appears as if the world were cracking all about me, and leaving me no object on which to fix my eyes."

Nevertheless new friends of a younger generation were drawing one after another to Landor's side. In the year after his visit to England there came from Cambridge the scholar and poet to whom the lovers of Landor are indebted for the most living and skilful sketch which they possess of his career as a whole. I mean Lord Houghton, then Mr. Monckton Milnes and a recent pupil of Julius Hare; from whom he brought to Landor a letter of introduction. Being laid up with Florentine fever, Mr. Milnes was taken by Landor to Fiesole to recruit, and passed several weeks in his villa. He has written of

Landor's affectionate reception, of his complimentary old-world manners, and of his elegant though simple hospitality; of his conversation, so affluent, animated, and coloured, so rich in knowledge and illustration, so gay and yet so weighty, that it equalled, if not surpassed, all that has been related of the table-talk of men eminent for social speech; and last, not least, of his laughter, "so pantomimic, yet so genial, rising out of a momentary silence into peals so cumulative and sonorous, that all contradiction and possible affront was merged for ever."

Yet another pilgrim of these days was Emerson. Landor was one of the five distinguished men for the sake of seeing whom he had made his first pilgrimage to Europe. Through a common friend, the sculptor Greenough, Emerson received an invitation to dine at the Villa Gherardesca, and in his *English Traits*, published many years afterwards, had much to say concerning his host. "I found him noble and courteous, living in a cloud of pictures at his Villa Gherardesca, a fine house commanding a beautiful landscape. I had inferred from his books, or magnified from some anecdotes, an impression of Achillean wrath—an untameable petulance. I do not know whether the imputation were just or not, but certainly on this May day his courtesy veiled that haughty mind, and he was the most patient and gentle of hosts." Then follows a report of conversations held and opinions expressed at the villa, to some part of which, as we shall see, Landor felt called upon to take exception when it appeared. Another American guest made not less welcome at the time, though he afterwards gave Landor occasion to repent his hospitality, was that most assiduous of flatterers and least delicate of gossips, N. P. Willis.

With him Landor discussed the project of an American edition of the *Imaginary Conversations*, and the discussion reached so practical a point that Landor actually entrusted to him his own copy of the five volumes already published, interleaved and full of corrections and additions, as well as his manuscript materials for a sixth. These Mr. Willis forthwith consigned to America, and having himself proceeded to England, lingered on in obsequious enjoyment of the great company among whom he found himself invited, and ceased to trouble himself any further about the business; nor was it until after much delay and annoyance that his neglected charge could be recovered from over seas. He had been more loyal in delivering to the hands to which it was addressed another volume in manuscript confided to him by Landor, that of the *Citation and Examination of William Shakspeare*. Of this, Lady Blessington undertook at Landor's request to superintend the publication, and it appeared anonymously in the course of the year 1834.

The *Examination of Shakspeare* is the first of that trilogy of books, as it has been sometimes called, the composition of which occupied the chief part of Landor's strength during his life at Fiesole. Some years before, he had written to Southey that he was trembling at his own audacity in venturing to bring Shakspeare upon the scene. At that time he merely meditated a dialogue of the ordinary compass, but the dialogue had grown into a volume. What attracted Landor especially towards the episode of Shakspeare's trial at Charlecote for deer-stealing was his own familiarity with the scenery and associations of the place. In an earlier dialogue of Chaucer, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, he had represented Chaucer as telling a story (and an uncommonly dreary story too) concerning

an imaginary ancestor of Sir Thomas Lucy. He now introduced that worthy magistrate himself, sitting in judgment in the hall of his house upon the youthful culprit from the neighbouring town. The account of the examination is supposed to be written by the magistrate's clerk, one Ephraim Barnett, a kindly soul, who allows his own compassion for the prisoner to appear plainly enough in the course of his narrative. The accusers are two of Sir Thomas's keepers, and the accused finds a malicious enemy in the person of the family chaplain, Master Silas Gough, who is conceived as having views of his own in reference to Anne Hathaway. The knight himself is made to show gleams of sense and kindness through his grotesque family and personal vanity. He has pretensions, moreover, to the character of an oracle on matters poetical. After many courteous rejoinders and covert banterings addressed by the prisoner to the knight, and many discomfitures of Master Silas, with much discussion and quotation of poetry, and an energetic working out of the intrinsic irony of the situation, the scene is brought to a close by the sudden escape of the prisoner, who darts out of the hall before any one can lay hands upon him, and in a trice is seen galloping past reach of pursuit upon his father's sorrel mare.

This is the longest and most sustained attempt ever made by Landor at witty or humorous writing. One of the greatest of humourists, Charles Lamb, is reported to have said of the book, which appeared a few weeks before his death, that only two men could have written it, namely the man who did write it, or he on whom it was written. This friendly formula was probably uttered with little meaning; but by Mr. Forster it has been taken in all seriousness. One of the earliest literary efforts of that zealous biographer himself was an enthusiastic review of the

Examination of Shakspeare when it appeared; and in writing Landor's life five-and-thirty years later he showed himself as enthusiastic as ever. Mrs. Browning has expressed a similar opinion, but I think it is one few students are likely to share. Landor's natural style is almost too weighty; his imitation of the seventeenth-century diction in this scene renders it even cumbrous. The imitative character of the prose is moreover quite out of keeping with the purely Landorian style of the verses with which the dialogue is interspersed. "Is there a man wise enough," wrote Landor once, "to know whether he himself is witty or not, to the extent he aims at? I doubt whether any question needs more self-examination. It is only the fool's heart that is at rest upon it." That Landor's own heart was not fully at rest on the question he shows by saying of the *Examination* when he sent it off, "It is full of fun, I know not whether of wit." It is evident that Landor's ample, exaggerative, broadly ironical vein of fun needed in order to commend it to others the help of his own genial presence and exulting, irresistible laugh. As conveyed by his strong-backed, stately-paced written sentences, its effect is to oppress rather than to exhilarate; such at least is the feeling of the present writer. Witty, in a towering, substantial, solidly ingenious way, Landor unquestionably is; but tellingly or adroitly so he is not; the trick of lightness, grotesqueness, of airy or grim banter, of rapidity and flash, is not within the compass of his powers.

Cumbrous as may be its pace, loaded its wit, the *Examination* is nevertheless rich in original thought and invention, and in wise and tender sayings; and some of the verses scattered through it, particularly the piece called the *Maid's Lament*, are excellent. But on the

whole it seems to me the nearest approach to an elaborate failure made by Landor in this form of writing. The personage of Shakspeare himself is certainly less successful than that of Sir Thomas Lucy. A single brief quotation may serve to show how energetically the author contrives to push his own vein of irony, and at the same time of poetry, into the utterances of the didactic knight. Waiving a promised lecture to the prisoner on the meaning of the words "natural cause," Sir Thomas Lucy goes on :—

Thy mind being unprepared for higher cogitations, and the groundwork and religious duty not being well rammer-beaten and flinted, I do pass over this supererogatory point, and inform thee rather, that bucks and swans and herons have something in their very names announcing them of knightly appurtenance. And (God forfend that evil do ensue therefrom!) that a goose on the common, or a game-cock on the loft of cottager or villager, may be seized, bagged, and abducted, with far less offence to the laws. In a buck there is something so gainly and so grand, he treadeth the earth with such ease and such agility, he abstaineth from all other animals with such punctilious avoidance, one would imagine God created him when He created knighthood. In the swan there is such purity, such coldness is there in the element he inhabiteth, such solitude of station, that verily he doth remind me of the Virgin Queen herself. Of the heron I have less to say, not having him about me; but I never heard his lordly croak without the conceit that it resembled a chancellor's or a primate's.

Following the *Examination of Shakspeare* in the same volume, and in a far happier vein, was a conversation, also feigned to have been preserved by the same scribe Ephraim Barnett, between Essex and Spenser after the burning of the poet's house and of his children in Ireland. This is indeed one of the noblest of all Landor's dialogues of passion. Caring little for Spenser's poetry, he had always been interested in his *View of the State of*

Affairs in Ireland; and Ireland in the wild days of the tithe rebellion, which was at its height when Landor wrote, was in the foreground of all men's thoughts. The beginning of the dialogue is political; Essex, who has just been charged with the settlement of the kingdom, questions Spenser without at first noticing his anguish and perturbation. Then follows the famous passage in which the revelation of the poet's misfortunes is at length forced from him. The noble courtesy of Essex, and the tenderness and imaginative beauty of the attempts made by him to console his friend before he knows the full nature of the misfortune, are set in his finest contrast with the crushed despair of Spenser, his shrinking from the intolerable memories within him, and the spasm almost of madness with which those memories at last burst from his lips, yet without ever tearing or forcing the strong fabric of the language in which they are conveyed. This is the dialogue to which perhaps first of all the reader should turn who wishes to form an idea of Landor's peculiar dramatic power and dramatic method.

The second book planned, and in great part written, by Landor at Fiesole was on a Greek theme; *Pericles and Aspasia;* and filled two volumes. It is characteristic of the author that he chose for the treatment of this subject a form which no one else would have thought of, namely the epistolary. He originally intended to introduce conversations as well, but in the end decided not to do so, and the book as it stands consists entirely of imaginary letters from Pericles to Aspasia, from Aspasia to Pericles, and from a few minor personages to each of them. The chief of these subordinate correspondents is Cleone, a friend and former companion of Aspasia at Miletus. Cleone is in love with a youth Xeniades, who himself hopelessly loves

Aspasia, and following her to Athens, dies there. Famous personages of Greek history, as Anaxagoras and Alcibiades, take part also in the correspondence. It is made to begin with the arrival of Aspasia in Athens, and her first meeting with Pericles, which is represented as taking place at a performance of the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus, and it ends with the death of Pericles during the plague of Athens and the occupation of the Athenian territory by the Spartans. Landor, as he used to say, loved walking upon the heights; he loved to think himself into fellow-citizenship with the greatest figures of the greatest ages of history; and he created for himself in *Pericles and Aspasia* an opportunity for pouring out all that he had imagined or reflected concerning the golden age of Greece. His sense of the glories of that age can best be realized by reading the language which he himself puts into the mouth of Pericles. Conscious of his approaching end, Pericles writes a farewell letter to Aspasia, whom he has sent into the country out of reach of contagion.

It is right and orderly (he begins) that he who has partaken so largely in the prosperity of the Athenians, should close the procession of their calamities. The fever that has depopulated our city, returned upon me last night, and Hippocrates and Acron tell me that my end is near.

When we agreed, O Aspasia, in the beginning of our loves, to communicate our thoughts by writing, even while we were both in Athens, and when we had many reasons for it, we little foresaw the more powerful one that has rendered it necessary of late. We never can meet again. The laws forbid it, and love itself enforces them. Let wisdom be heard by you as imperturbably, and affection as authoritatively, as ever; and remember that the sorrow of Pericles can arise but from the bosom of Aspasia. There is only one word of tenderness we could say, which we have not said oftentimes before; and there

is no consolation in it. The happy never say, and never hear said, farewell.

Then, in a strain at once of composed resignation and exulting retrospect, and in language beneath the austere simplicity of which there throbs the pulse of a passionate emotion, he proceeds to recount the glorious memories of his life.

And now (he concludes) at the close of my day, when every light is dim, and every guest departed, let me own that these wane before me, remembering, as I do, in the pride and fulness of my heart, that Athens confided her glory, and Aspasia her happiness, to me.

Have I been a faithful guardian? Do I resign them to the custody of the gods undiminished and unimpaired? Welcome, then, welcome, my last hour! After enjoying for so great a number of years, in my public and private life, what I believe has never been the lot of any other, I now extend my hand to the urn, and take without reluctance or hesitation what is the lot of all.

The technical scholar, it is true, will find in *Pericles and Aspasia* improbabilities and anachronisms enough; for Landor wrote as usual out of his head, and without renewing his acquaintance with authorities for his special purpose; and his knowledge, astonishing from any other point of view, was from that of technical scholarship incomplete. He did not trouble himself about considerations of this kind, observing rightly enough that Dialogue was not History, and that in a work of imagination some liberties might legitimately be taken with fact. Only then he should have been careful not to quit that sphere of thought and feeling where imagination is lawfully paramount; not to lay aside, as he too often does, the tone of the literary artist for that of the critical and historical inquirer. *Pericles and Aspasia*, like some of the

classical *Conversations*, has the misfortune of being weighted with disquisitions too learned for the general reader, and not sound enough for the special student. But for this drawback, the book is throughout in Landor's best manner. It is full of variety and invention; we pass from the performance of *Prometheus* before the assembled Athenians to Aspasia's account of the dawn of love between herself and Pericles, and of the fascination and frowardness of the boy Alcibiades; to letters which reveal the love-frenzy of the unhappy Xeniades; then to others containing criticisms, accompanied by imaginary specimens, of various greater or minor Greek poets; and thence to original exercises in poetry by the correspondents themselves. One of these, the fragment attempted, we are asked to believe, by Aspasia, on the re-union of Agamemnon and Iphigenia among the shades, Landor always accounted his best piece of dramatic writing in verse. In later editions there are added in this place other scenes exhibiting the vengeance of Orestes, and illustrating the proud and well-founded confidence of originality with which Landor was accustomed to approach anew themes already handled even by the greatest of masters. Besides all this, we have speeches of Pericles on the death of Cimon, the war of Samos, the defection of Megara and of Eubœa, and the policy of Athens against Sparta; speeches brief, compressed, stately, uniting with a careful avoidance of the examples to be found in Thucydides a still more careful observance of the precept, "There is so very much *not* to say." We have the scene in which Aspasia is accused before the assembly, and Pericles defends her. Towards the close of the correspondence we find reflected in it the shadows of war, pestilence, and calamity. Finally, after the death of

Pericles, there are added two letters in which Alcibiades tells Aspasia how he died, and how Cleone, arriving at the house of mourning from Miletus, was seized by infection on the threshold, and staggering towards the garden where Xeniades lay buried, died clasping the tomb of him she had loved in vain.

In all this the strength, conciseness, and harmony of Landor's English style are at their height. The verses in the book are again very unequal; its prose is exemplary and delightful. The properly dramatic parts, the ebb and flow of feeling between Pericles and Aspasia, and between Cleone and Xeniades, are often touched with Landor's utmost, that is, as we have said, with an all but Shakspearian subtlety and justice of insight. The reflective parts are full of sayings as new as they are wise, often illustrated and enforced with images of singular beauty. The spirit of beauty, indeed, reigns, as it reigns in hardly any other modern writing, over the thoughts and language of the characters, and the two volumes are perhaps the richest mine which English prose literature contains of noble and unused quotations.

As if the body of his book were not full enough, Landor must needs append to it two close-packed epilogues written in his own name. One was political, nominally on the Athenian government, but really full of his ideas on modern and especially English politics, on the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the reform of the House of Lords and of the episcopacy; the other literary, containing many of those arguments on language and orthography, intended for insertion in the *Conversations*, of which Landor's original draft had for the present disappeared through the carelessness of Mr. N. P. Willis. That gentleman had in the meantime not a little

scandalized his acquaintances in England by the book in which he had narrated his experiences. To this publication and to his own loss Landor alludes as follows:—"I never look for anything, but I should add disappointment and some degree of inquietude to the loss. I regret the appearance of his book more than the disappearance of mine. . . . Greatly as I have been flattered by the visits of American gentlemen, I hope that for the future no penciller of similar compositions will deviate in my favour to the right hand of the road from Florence to Fiesole. In case of mistake, there is a charming view of the two cities, and of Valdarno and Vallombrosa, from the iron gate at the entrance of my grounds: I could not point out a more advantageous position."

Landor had by this time learnt not to imperil his equanimity by personal dealings with publishers. Mr. G. P. R. James undertook the arrangements for *Pericles and Aspasia*, as Lady Blessington had undertaken those for the *Examination of Shakspeare*. The book was received with delight by a distinguished few, but ignored by the general public. The publisher lost money by it, and Landor, without a word of complaint, insisted on making good the loss. He in like manner paid instead of receiving money for the publication of his next book, the *Pentameron and Pentalogia*. The *Pentameron* is a series of dialogues, connected by a slender thread of narrative, and supposed to have been held on five successive days between Petrarch and Boccaccio, in Boccaccio's villa of Certaldo, during his recovery from an illness and not long before his death. The *Pentalogia*, which follows, is a series of five miscellaneous dramatic scenes entirely independent of the *Pentameron*, and conceived in just the same vein as the shorter, dramatic, imaginary conversations; only written in

blank verse instead of prose. Two of these are from the story of Orestes, and are incorporated in the later editions of *Pericles and Aspasia;* the others are between Essex and Bacon; the Parents of Luther; and William Rufus and Tyrrell; the latter a piece of great vigour and spirit.

In the *Pentameron* Landor is again at his very best. All his study of the great Italian writers of the fourteenth century, and all his recent observations of Tuscan scenery and Tuscan character, are turned to skilful and harmonious account. Landor loved and understood Boccaccio through and through; and if he over-estimated that prolific and amiable genius in comparison with other and greater men, it was an error which for the present purpose was almost an advantage. Nothing can be pleasanter than the intercourse of the two friendly poets as Landor had imagined it; nothing more classically idyllic than the incidental episodes. Even the humour of the piece is successful, in all at least that has to do with the characters of the sly parish priest, the pretty and shrewd servant maid Assuntina, and her bashful lover. True, there occur one or two heavy stories, heavily and ineffectively told. And many lovers of Dante may be shocked at the unsympathetic criticism of that poet which fills a large part of each day's conversation. This is in part consonant with the opinions ascribed traditionally to Petrarch, and in part represents Landor's private judgment. He held Dante to be one of the very greatest of all poets, but thought he showed his true greatness only at rare intervals. Recognizing in poetry, as in history, the part due to the individual alone, Landor holds Dante personally responsible for all those qualities which were imprinted on him by his element and his age. Instead of perceiving in him, as Carlyle taught

the next generation of students to perceive, the "voice" of all the Catholic centuries, the incarnation of the spirit of the Middle Age and of Florence, Landor acknowledged in him only a man of extraordinary genius, who had indulged in the *Inferno* in a great deal of vindictive ferocity, and in the *Paradiso* of barren theological mysticism. Having no sympathy for the Gothic in literature, that is to say, for the fantastic, the unreasonable, and the grim, Landor collects for superfluous and somewhat tedious reprobation examples of these qualities from Dante. He asserts an extravagant disproportion between the good and the bad parts of his work, and fails to do justice even to that unmatched power which Dante exhibits in every page, and which Landor himself shared with him in a remarkable degree, of striking out a visible image in words sudden, massive, and decisive. But all this and more may be forgiven Landor for the sake of such criticism as he devotes to those parts of Dante which he does admire. On the episode of Piero and Francesca, he has put into the mouth of Boccaccio the following comments :—

Petrarca. The thirty lines from *Ed io sentì*, are unequalled by any other continuous thirty in the whole dominions of poetry.

Boccacio. Give me rather the six on Francesca : for if in the former I find the simple, vigorous, clear narration, I find also what I would not wish, the features of Ugolino reflected full in Dante. The two characters are similar in themselves ; hard, cruel, inflexible, malignant, but, whenever moved, moved powerfully. In Francesca, with the faculty of divine spirits, he leaves his own nature (not indeed the exact representative of theirs), and converts all his strength into tenderness. The great poet, like the original man of the Platonists, is double, possessing the further advantage of being able to drop one half at his option, and to resume it. Some of the tenderest on

paper have no sympathies beyond; and some of the austerest in their intercourse with their fellow-creatures, have deluged the world with tears. It is not from the rose that the bee gathers honey, but often from the most acrid and most bitter leaves and petals.

> Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
> Esser baciato di cotanto amante,
> Questi, che mai da me non fia diviso!
> La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante . . .
> *Galeotto* fù il libro, e chi lo scrisse . . .
> Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.

In the midst of her punishment, Francesca, when she comes to the tenderest part of her story, tells it with complacency and delight; and, instead of naming Paolo, which indeed she never has done from the beginning, she now designates him as

> Questi, che mai da me non fia diviso!

Are we not impelled to join in her prayer, wishing them happier in their union?

Petrarca. If there be no sin in it.

Boccacio. Ay, and even if there be . . . God help us! What a sweet aspiration in each cesura of the verse! three love-sighs fixt and incorporate! Then when she hath said

> La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante,

she stops: she would avert the eyes of Dante from her: he looks for the sequel: she thinks he looks severely: she says, "*Galeotto* is the name of the book," fancying by this timorous little flight she has drawn him far enough from the nest of her young loves. No, the eagle beak of Dante and his piercing eyes are yet over her. "*Galeotto* is the name of the book." "What matters that?" "And of the writer." "Or that either?" At last she disarms him: but how? "*That* day we read no more." Such a depth of intuitive judgment, such a delicacy of perception, exists not in any other work of human genius.

It is a part of Landor's own delicacy in handling the passage that he postpones until another time the mention

of its one flaw; namely the fact that *Galeotto* is really an equivalent for *Pandarus*. Next to this example of what Landor could do in criticism, let us take, also from the *Pentameron*, an example of what he could do in allegory. This was a form of composition for which Landor had in general some contempt, especially when, as by Spenser, it was used as a foundation more or less shifting and dubious for an independent structure of romance. But the direct and unambiguous use of allegory in illustration of human life and experience he thought occasionally permissible, and no one except the object of his aversion, Plato, has used it as well. Petrarch's allegory, or rather dream, in the Pentameron, is of love, sleep, and death. It is an example unmatched, as I think, in literature, of the union of Greek purity of outline with Florentine poignancy of sentiment. The oftener we read it, the more strongly it attracts and holds us by the treble charm of its quiet, sober cadences, its luminous imagery, and its deep, consolatory wisdom. The thoughts and feelings concerning life and the issues of life which it translates into allegorical shape will be found to yield more and more meaning the closer they are grasped:—

I had reflected for some time on this subject (the use and misuse of allegory, says Petrarch), when, wearied with the length of my walk over the mountains, and finding a soft old mole-hill covered with grey grass by the wayside, I laid my head upon it and slept. I cannot tell how long it was before a species of dream or vision came over me.

Two beautiful youths appeared beside me; each was winged; but the wings were hanging down, and seemed ill adapted to flight. One of them, whose voice was the softest I ever heard, looking at me frequently, said to the other, "He is under my guardianship for the present; do not awaken him with that feather." Methought, on hearing the whisper, I saw

something like the feather of an arrow, and then the arrow itself—the whole of it, even to the point; although he carried it in such a manner that it was difficult at first to discover more than a palm's length of it; the rest of the shaft (and the whole of the barb) was behind his ancles.

"This feather never awakens any one," replied he rather petulantly, "but it brings more of confident security, and more of cherished dreams than you, without me, are capable of imparting."

"Be it so," answered the gentler, "none is less inclined to quarrel or dispute than I am. Many whom you have wounded grievously call upon me for succour, but so little am I disposed to thwart you it is seldom I venture to do more for them than to whisper a few words of comfort in passing. How many reproaches on these occasions have been cast upon me for indifference and infidelity! Nearly as many and nearly in the same terms as upon you."

"Odd enough that we, O sleep! should be thought so alike!" said Love contemptuously. "Yonder is he who bears a nearer resemblance to you; the dullest have observed it."

I fancied I turned my eyes to where he was pointing, and saw at a distance the figure he designated. Meanwhile the contention went on uninterruptedly. Sleep was slow in asserting his power or his benefits. Love recapitulated them, but only that he might assert his own above them. Suddenly he called on me to decide, and to choose my patron. Under the influence, first of the one, then of the other, I sprang from repose to rapture; I alighted from rapture on repose, and knew not which was sweetest. Love was very angry with me, and declared he would cross me throughout the whole of my existence. Whatever I might on other occasions have thought of his veracity I now felt too surely the conviction that he would keep his word. At last, before the close of the altercation, the third genius had advanced, and stood near us. I cannot tell how I knew him, but I knew him to be the genius of Death. Breathless as I was at beholding him, I soon became familiar with his features. First they seemed only calm; presently they became contemplative, and lastly beautiful;

those of the Graces themselves are less regular, less harmonious, less composed. Love glanced at him unsteadily, with a countenance in which there was somewhat of anxiety, somewhat of disdain, and cried, "Go away! go away! Nothing that thou touchest lives."

"Say rather, child!" replied the advancing form, and advancing grew loftier and statelier, say rather that nothing of beautiful or of glorious lives its own true life until my wing hath passed over it."

Love pouted, and rumpled and bent down with his forefinger the stiff short feathers on his arrow-head, but replied not. Although he frowned worse than ever, and at me, I dreaded him less and less, and scarcely looked toward him. The milder and calmer genius, the third, in proportion as I took courage to contemplate him, regarded me with more and more complacency. He held neither flower nor arrow, as the others did; but throwing back the clusters of dark curls that overshadowed his countenance, he presented to me his hand, openly and benignly. I shrank on looking at him so near, and yet I sighed to love him. He smiled, not without an expression of pity, at perceiving my diffidence, my timidity; for I remembered how soft was the hand of Sleep, how warm and entrancing was Love's. By degrees I grew ashamed of my ingratitude, and turning my face away, I held out my arms and felt my neck within his. Composure allayed all the throbbings of my bosom, the coolness of freshest morning breathed around, the heavens seemed to open above me, while the beautiful cheek of my deliverer rested on my head. I would now have looked for those others, but, knowing my intention by my gesture, he said consolatorily,—

"Sleep is on his way to the earth, where many are calling him, but it is not to them he hastens; for every call only makes him fly further off. Sedately and gravely as he looks, he is nearly as capricious and volatile as the more arrogant and ferocious one."

"And Love," said I, "whither is he departed? If not too late I would propitiate and appease him."

"He who cannot follow me, he who cannot overtake and pass me," said the genius, "is unworthy of the name, the

most glorious in earth or heaven. Look up! Love is yonder, and ready to receive thee."

I looked; the earth was under me; I saw only the clear blue sky, and something brighter above it.

The *Pentameron* bears on its title-page the date 1837. Before the book appeared a great change had come over Landor's life. He had said farewell to his beautiful home at Fiesole; had turned his back upon his children; uprooted himself from all his household pleasures and occupations; and come back to live alone in England. In a poem introduced into the *Pentameron* itself, in which those pleasures and occupations are more fully described than in any other of his writings, he looks upon them already as things of the past. The piece is nominally quoted by Boccaccio as the work of an Italian gentleman forced to leave his country; it is really an address written by Landor from England to his youngest son "Carlino."

To this second disruption of his home Landor had been forced by renewed dissensions with his wife. The Fiesolan household had in truth been below the surface no harmonious or well-ordered one. A husband absorbed in his own imaginings, a wife more ready to make herself agreeable to any one else than to her husband, children devotedly loved, but none the less allowed to run wild, here were of themselves elements enough of domestic shipwreck. Add to this that Landor's own occasional bursts of passion would seem to have met more than their match in Mrs. Landor's persistent petulance of opposition. The immediate cause of his departure he himself, and at least one friendly witness, alleged to have been the language repeatedly, and in the face of all remonstrances, addressed to him by his wife in presence of the children. This Landor had felt to be alike

demoralizing to them and humiliating to himself, and had determined to endure it no longer. He left his home in the spring of 1835; spent the summer by himself at the Baths of Lucca; reached England early in the autumn, stayed for three months with his friend Ablett at Llanbedr, and then went for the winter to Clifton. Next year he was for a long time again at Llanbedr, after which he stayed for a while in London, renewing old friendships and forming new. In the meantime friends of both sides of the house had been endeavouring to bring about some kind of arrangement between the husband and wife. In the interests of the children, over whom Mrs. Landor confessed that she had no control, it was proposed that while they and she should continue to live together, whether in England or abroad, Landor should establish himself, if not under the same roof, at any rate close by. At one time it was settled that the children should come to meet their father in Germany, and with that view Landor travelled to Heidelberg in September, 1836. But they never came, nor were any of the other proposed arrangements in the end found practicable. Landor's children remained with their mother at Fiesole; letters and presents continued to be exchanged between them and their father; twice or thrice in the coming years they came to visit him in England; but they were practically lost to him henceforward. With his wife's relations living in this country he continued to be on perfectly cordial terms. The winter of 1836-37 he passed, like the last, at Clifton, where he and Southey, whose health and strength began about this time to fail, once more enjoyed the happiness of each other's society. From Clifton Landor went again, as on the previous year, first to stay with Ablett at Llanbedr, and then with Lady Bles-

sington, now widowed, in London. The rest of the summer having been spent in visits at Torquay and Plymouth, he finally settled down, in October, 1837, at Bath; and from this date a new period in his life begins.

The two years between Landor's departure from Fiesole and his establishment at Bath had not been idly spent. The last touches had been added to *Pericles and Aspasia*, and a good deal of the *Pentameron* had been for the first time written, either at the Baths of Lucca, or afterwards in England. Other minor publications had quickly followed. First an Irish squib in verse, of which the less said the better, directed against the morality of the priesthood, and entitled *Terry Hogan*. Next a political pamphlet in the form of letters addressed to Lord Melbourne, and called *Letters of a Conservative*. The particular point to which these letters is directed is the remedy of episcopal abuses in Wales; but they contain much political and personal matter of interest besides. For one thing they inform us of, what students of Landor seem hitherto to have overlooked, the precise shape which his long-cherished project of a history of his own times had latterly assumed, and of the end to which it had come.

> It is known to many distinguished men, literary and political, of both parties, that I have long been occupied in writing a work, which I thought to entitle *The Letters of a Conservative*. In these I attempted to trace and to expose the faults and fallacies of every administration, from the beginning of the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. I was born at the opening of that year; and many have been my opportunities of conversing, at home and abroad, with those who partook in the events that followed it. . . . . I threw these papers into the fire; no record of them is existing.

Landor's reason for destroying his work had been the creditable one that its reprehension of some living states-

men had come to him to seem more strong than was desirable to publish. In the course of the far narrower argument to which his present *Letters* are directed, Landor finds occasion for these extremely characteristic observations on the national and religious characteristics of the Welsh, to whom, after his prolonged visits at Llanbedr, he feels more kindly now than of yore, in comparison with those of the Irish:—

In the Irish we see the fire and vivacity of a southern people: their language, their religion, every thought is full of images. They have been, and ever must be, idolaters. Do not let their good clergy be angry with me for the expression. I mean no harm by it. Firmly do I believe that the Almighty is too merciful and too wise for anger or displeasure at it. Would one of these kind-hearted priests be surly at being taken for another? Certainly not: and quite as certainly the Maker of mankind will graciously accept their gratitude, whether the offering be laid in the temple or on the turf, whether in the enthusiasm of the heart, before a beautiful image, expressing love and benignity, or, without any visible object, in the bleak and desart air.

The Welshman is serious, concentrated and morose; easily offended, not easily appeased; strongly excited by religious zeal; but there is melancholy in the musick of his mind. Cimmerian gloom is hanging still about his character; and his God is the God of the mountain and the storm.

One more equally characteristic quotation, and we may close the *Letters of a Conservative.*

The Bishop of London groaned at an apparition in Ireland: and a horrible one it was indeed. A clergyman was compelled by the severity of Fortune, or, more Christianly speaking, by the wiles and maliciousness of Satan, to see his son work in his garden.

Had the right reverend baron passed my house, early in the morning, or late in the evening, the chances are that he would

have found me doing the same thing, and oftentimes more unprofitably; that is, planting trees from which some other will gather the fruit. Would his mitred head have turned giddy to see me on a ladder, pruning or grafting my peaches? I should have been sorry for it, not being used to come down until my work was over, even when visitors no less illustrious than the right reverend baron have called on me. But we have talked together in our relative stations; I above, they below.

Besides this, Landor contributed in 1837 to Leigh Hunt's *Monthly Repository* a series of dialogues and letters called *High and Low Life in Italy*, which are good in proportion to their gravity; the majority, being facetious, are somewhat forced and dreary. A rare volume, and one much cherished by the lovers of Landor, is that which Mr. Ablett printed for private distribution in this same year 1837. It contains a lithograph from Count d'Orsay's profile of Landor drawn in 1825; a dedication or inscription two pages long, and in the most mincingly ceremonious vein, to Mrs. Ablett by her husband, and a selection from the *Conversations* and other fugitive pieces which Landor had contributed to various periodicals since his visit to England five years before; besides some extracts from Leigh Hunt, and one or two effusions which appear to be Mr. Ablett's own.

Lastly Landor printed, still in the autumn of 1837, a pamphlet in rhyming couplets which he called *A Satire on Satirists, and Admonition to Detractors.* This is an attempt in a manner of writing which he had abandoned since boyhood. Landor had allowed himself for once to be irritated by a review; an attack, namely, on his scholarship (accompanied, it should be said, with general criticisms of a laudatory kind) which had appeared in *Blackwood.* He now indulged, clumsily it must be confessed, in the

somewhat stale entertainment of baiting Scotch reviewers. The only things which make the *Satire* noteworthy are the lines in which Landor alludes to his own scene of Agamemnon and Iphigenia,—

> Far from the footstool of the tragic throne,
> I am tragedian in this scene alone,—

and the passages in which he allows himself to turn against the old object of his respect and admiration, Wordsworth. He had been letting certain remarks uttered by or attributed to Wordsworth rankle in his mind. He had begun to discover, during his visit in 1832, the narrow intellectual sympathies of that great poet, and his indifference to the merits of nearly all poetry except his own. Now again, in the summer of 1837, Landor had seen or imagined Wordsworth cold, while every one else was enthusiastic, when they were present together at the first night of Talfourd's *Ion*. Lastly, it had been related to him that Wordsworth had said he would not give five shillings a ream for the poetry of Southey. Never in the least degree jealous on his own account, Landor was intensely so on account of his friend, and forgetting the lifelong intimacy and regard of Wordsworth and Southey, thought proper to call the former to account as a "Detractor." The lines in which he does so are not good; they hit what was to some extent really a blot in Wordsworth's nature; but they had much better never have been written; and we think with regret of the old phrases of regard—"*vir, civis, philosophe, poeta, præstantissime*," and "When 'mid their light thy light appears." Wordsworth, to whose notice the attack was only brought some time after it appeared, was little ruffled by it. Neither was Landor on his part, when Crabbe Robinson strongly

remonstrated with him on his Satire, the least offended. Among other things, Landor had referred to his own lines on the Shell, from *Gebir*, as being "the bar from which Wordsworth drew his wire" in a nearly analogous passage of the *Excursion*. Wordsworth denied any conscious imitation. It may at this point not be without interest to compare Landor's original lines, the best known in all his poetry, with those in which they were thus echoed by his brother poets, accidentally, it seems, by Wordsworth, and avowedly by Byron. In the original it is the sea-nymph who proposes the shell as an appropriate forfeit to be paid by her to Tamar if he beats her in wrestling:—

> But I have sinuous shells of pearly hue
> Within, and they that lustre have imbibed
> In the Sun's palace-porch, where, when unyoked,
> His chariot-wheel stands midway in the wave,
> Shake one, and it awakens; then apply
> Its polisht lip to your attentive ear,
> And it remembers its august abodes,
> And murmurs as the ocean murmurs there.

Byron's lines in the *Island* compare the subdued sound of the sea at sunset with that to be heard in the shell; and it is of a piece with his usual swinging carelessness of the "murmurer" of one line is made to "rave" three lines further on:—

> The Ocean scarce spoke louder with his swell
> Than breathes his mimic murmurer in the shell,
> As, far divided from his parent deep,
> The sea-born infant cries, and will not sleep,
> Raising his little plaint in vain, to rave
> For the broad bosom of his nursing wave.

Wordsworth turns the phenomenon to account for the purposes of a fine metaphysical and didactic metaphor,

describing it at the same time in lines which, compared with any of those in the passage from *Gebir* except the fourth and fifth, are somewhat lumbering and diluted. The shell, Landor said, had in this version lost its pearly hue within, and its memory of where it had abided.

> I have seen
> A curious child who dwelt upon a tract
> Of inland ground, applying to his ear
> The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
> To which, in silence hush'd, his very soul
> Listen'd intensely; and his countenance soon
> Brighten'd with joy; for murmurings from within
> Were heard, sonorous cadences! whereby,
> To his belief, the monitor express'd
> Mysterious union with its native sea.
> Even such a Shell the universe itself
> Is to the ear of faith.

In Landor's general criticisms on Wordsworth's poetry, from this time forward, there is perceptible less change of tone than in those on his person. The great achievement of Wordsworth, his poetical revelation of a sympathy, more close and binding than had ever before been expressed in words, between the hearts of nature and of man, had in it too much of the metaphysical for Landor at any time fully to appreciate. But now as formerly, Wordsworth remained for Landor a fine poet, although marred by puerility and dulness; the best of all poets of country life; the author of the best sonnets, after one or two of Milton, in the language, and in his *Laodamia* of at least one poem classical both in thought and expression.

CHAPTER VII.

LIFE AT BATH—DRAMAS—HELLENICS—LAST FRUIT—DRY STICKS.

(1837—1858.)

During the two unsettled years that followed his return to England, Landor, as we have seen, continued to write as industriously as ever. Neither is there perceptible in the works so produced the shadow of any severe inward struggle or distress. Did Landor then really, we cannot help asking ourselves, feel very deeply the breaking up of his beautiful Italian home or not? A few years before he could not bear his children to be out of his sight even for a day; did he suffer as we should have expected him to suffer at his total separation from them now?

The poem of which mention has been made in the last chapter treats of their pleasures and occupations at the Villa Gherardesca in a tone of affectionate, but by no means inconsolable, regret. Another retrospective piece written at Torquay in 1837 touches on the same matters in a still lighter strain. A brief and probably somewhat earlier *Farewell to Italy*, in blank verse, is a good deal graver in its tone; but the only instance, except once or twice in his letters, in which Landor writes of his changed life in a strain at all approaching despondency, is in the following set of verses

composed on one of his birthdays; verses which happen also to be among his best; classically simple and straightforward in thought and diction, and in cadence unusually full and solemn:—

The day returns, my natal day,
  Borne on the storm and pale with snow,
And seems to ask me why I stay,
  Stricken by Time and bow'd by Woe.

Many were once the friends who came
  To wish me joy; and there are some
Who wish it now; but not the same;
  They are whence friends can never come;

Nor are they you my love watcht o'er
  Cradled in innocence and sleep;
You smile into my eyes no more,
  Nor see the bitter tears they weep.

The same question which we have thus been led to ask ourselves as to the depth or lack of depth in Landor's private and domestic feelings, seems to have been addressed to him in person by some friend about this time. Here is his reply:—

So, then, I feel not deeply! if I did,
I should have seized the pen and pierced therewith
The passive world!
                And thus thou reasonest?
Well hast thou known the lover's, not so well
The poet's heart: while that heart bleeds, the hand
Presses it close. Grief must run on and pass
Into near Memory's more quiet shade
Before it can compose itself in song.
He who is agonized and turns to show
His agony to those who sit around,
Seizes the pen in vain: thought, fancy, power,
Rush back into his bosom; all the strength
Of genius cannot draw them into light
From under mastering Grief; but Memory,

> The Muse's mother, nurses, rears them up,
> Informs, and keeps them with her all her days.

As a critical reflection of general application, there is justice in the thought here expressed with so much gracefulness and precision; but as solving the point raised in relation to Landor's own character, the answer can hardly be taken as sufficient. We must remember on the one hand that his principles, both in life and literature, tended towards the suppression and control of emotion rather than towards its indulgence and display. In life his ambition was to walk "with Epicurus on the right hand and Epictetus on the left:" in literature, to attain the balance and self-governance of the Greeks. For the former effort, Landor's character unfitted him; his temperament was too strong for his philosophy; in the latter effort he succeeded, and a part of the peculiar quality of his writing proceeds from its expression of the most impetuous feelings and judgments in a style of classical sobriety and reserve. But stormy as was Landor's nature upon the surface, we may still doubt whether its depths were ever so strongly moved by the things of real life as by the things of imagination. The bitterest tears he shed would seem by his own confession to have been those which were drawn from him, not by the sorrows and estrangements of his own experience, but by moving passages of literature, and the misfortunes of old-world heroines and heroes. "Most things," he writes to Lady Blessington, "are réal to me except realities." The realities moreover which did affect him were chiefly the realities of to-day, and not those of yesterday or to-morrow. A wrench once made, a tie once broken, he could accommodate himself without too much suffering to the change. Neither the sense of continuity nor the sense of responsibility

in human relations seems to have been practically very strong in him. The injury done to his children by leaving them subject to no discipline at such an age and in such surroundings, would appear hardly to have weighed on Landor's mind at all, and that it failed to do so is, I think, the most serious blot upon his character.

His own answer would have been that to separate the children from their mother would have been cruel, and to let them continue witnesses of her altercations with himself, impossible. The visits which as they grew up they came at long intervals to pay him in England, were at first ardently anticipated, but failed to lead to any relations of close or lasting sympathy. In all that concerned their material welfare, he had in the meanwhile shown himself as unreservedly generous as ever. Landor's estates of Llanthony and Ipsley were yielding at this time upwards of three thousand pounds a year, of which mortgages and insurances absorbed every year about fourteen hundred. Out of the remaining sixteen hundred a year, he had been in the habit during his life at Fiesole of spending altogether not much over six, allowing the balance to accumulate for the benefit of his younger children. When he left Fiesole, he dispossessed himself, in the interest of his eldest son Arnold, of his property in the villa, with its farms and gardens, which of themselves were almost sufficient for the support of the family. At the same time he made over to Mrs. Landor two-thirds of the income which he had been accustomed to spend while they were all under one roof, reserving to himself the other third only, that is about two hundred pounds a year. Finding this after a year or two's experience in England insufficient, he allowed himself as much more out of the share hitherto suffered to accumulate for the

younger children, making four hundred pounds a year in all. On this income Landor lived, and was perfectly content to live, in the solitary home which he had by this time made for himself in a Bath lodging.

His solitude was not morose or devoid of consolations. In Bath itself he found friends after his own heart, and first among them Colonel, afterwards Sir William, Napier, the historian of the Peninsular War, with whom for years it was Landor's habit to spend a part of almost every day. He enjoyed moreover the tender regard and devotion of his wife's niece, Teresita Stopford, afterwards Lady Charles Beauclerk, as well as of another young lady, Rose Paynter, now Lady Sawle, a connexion of the Aylmer family, whose name and lineage revived old days and old affections in his mind. He was accustomed during the earlier part of his Bath life to pay visits nearly every year to a certain number of chosen friends, and most regularly of all to Lady Blessington. Throughout the long strain and fever of her brilliant, irregular social career at Gore House, beset by cares and crowds, and hard pressed by the consequences of her own and D'Orsay's profusion, this lady never lost the warmth and constancy of heart which so rarely accompany promiscuous hospitality, yet without which hospitality is but dust and ashes. She taught Landor to regard Gore House as a kind of second home, and he came to entertain quite a tender feeling for the room which was always kept for him there, and especially for a certain lilac and a certain laurel that used to come into blossom about the time of his yearly visit. At Gore House he made, and from time to time refreshed, an acquaintance with many of the most distinguished men of the then rising generation. His closest friends of that generation were Forster and

Dickens, who attached themselves to him, the former especially, with an enthusiastic warmth of admiration and regard. Besides Lady Blessington, we find Landor in the habit of paying visits to his old friend Kenyon at Wimbledon, to Julius Hare, now installed as archdeacon at the family living of Hurstmonceaux, to Ablett in Wales, to Lord Nugent near Aylesbury, to Sir William Molesworth at Pencarrow, to his brother Robert in his beautiful rectory at Birlingham, to his sisters at Warwick, and to his wife's sisters at Richmond.

Wherever Landor went he made the same impression, which was that of a king and a lion among men. In appearance he had gained greatly with age. As sturdy and as florid as ever, he was now in addition beautifully venerable. His bold and keen grey eyes retained all their power, his teeth remained perfectly strong and white, but his forehead had become bald and singularly imposing, high-vaulted, broad and full beneath its thick white fringe of backward-flowing hair. Every man's face, as has been truly said, is in great part his own making; and the characters which time had imprinted on Landor's were not those of his transient bursts of fury, but those of his habitual moods of lofty thought and tender feeling. All the lines of his countenance were large and, except when the fit was upon him, full of benignity, his smile especially being of an inexpressible sweetness. His movements were correspondingly massive, but at the same time clumsy; not, of course, with the clumsiness of ill-breeding, but rather with that of aimlessness and inefficiency. The physical signs of the unpractical man were indeed all of them written upon Landor. He had short arms, with constrained movements of the elbows, and even when his fists were clenched in wrath, there was a noticeable

relaxation about the thumbs, a thing never yet seen to accompany tenacity of practical will or tact in practical dealings. He would put his spectacles up over his forehead, and after oversetting everything in the wildest search for them, submit himself with desperate resignation to their loss. In travelling he would give himself worlds of trouble to remember the key of his portmanteau, but utterly forget the portmanteau itself; and when he discovered that he had lost it, he would launch out into an appalling picture of the treachery and depravity of the railway officials concerned, and of their fathers and grandfathers to the remotest generation. Next, after a moment's silence, the humourous view of the case would present itself to him, and he would begin to laugh, quietly at first, and then in louder and ever louder volleys, until the room shook again, and the commotion seemed as if it would never stop. These tempests of hilarity seemed to some of Landor's friends almost as formidable as the tempests of anger to which he continued to be subject at the suspicion of a contradiction or a slight. But both were well worth undergoing for the sake of such noble and winning company as was that of Landor in his ordinary moods. Then not only was his talk incomparably rich and full, it was delivered with such a courtly charm of manner and address, such a rotundity, mellowness, and old-world grace of utterance as were irresistible. His voice, especially in reading aloud, was as sympathetic as it was powerful; "fibrous in all its tones, whether gentle or fierce," says Lord Houghton; deep, rich, and like the noblest music, "with a small, inartificial quiver striking to the heart," adds another witness who by-and-by attached herself to the grand old man with a filial devotion, and who has left us the most life-like as well as the most affec-

tionate portrait of him during these years.[1] His pronunciation of certain words was that traditional in many old English families; "yaller" and "laylock" for yellow and lilac, "goold," "Room," and "woonderful," for gold, Rome, and wonderful.

Even at his wildest, Landor's demeanour to his pet animals furnished assurance enough that his fury was much more loud than deep, and that the quality most rooted in his nature was its gentleness. Dickens has best embodied this impression in his character of Mr. Boythorn in *Bleak House*, which is drawn, as is well known, from Landor, with his intellectual greatness left out. We all remember how Mr. Boythorn softly caresses his canary with his forefinger, at the same time as he thunders out defiance and revenge against Sir Leicester Dedlock; "He brings actions for trespass; I bring actions for trespass. He brings actions for assault and battery; I defend them, and continue to assault and batter. Ha! Ha! Ha!" Landor's great pet in these days was not really a canary, but a yellow Pomeranian dog, all vivacity, affection, and noise, who was sent him from Fiesole in 1844, and became the delight and companion of his life. With "Pomero" Landor would prattle in English and Italian as affectionately as a mother with her child. Pomero was his darling, the wisest and most beautiful of his race; Pomero had the brightest eyes and the most woonderful yaller tail ever seen. Sometimes it was Landor's humour to quote Pomero in speech and writing as a kind of sagacious elder brother, whose opinion had to be consulted on all subjects before he would deliver his own. This creature accompanied his master wherever he went, barking "not

[1] See Prefatory Note, No. 10.

fiercely, but familiarly" at friend and stranger, and when they came in, would either station himself upon his master's head to watch the people passing in the street, or else lie curled up in his basket until Landor, in talk with some visitor, began to laugh, and his laugh to grow and grow, when Pomero would spring up, and leap upon and fume about him, barking and screaming for sympathy until the whole street resounded. The two together, master and dog, were for years to be encountered daily on their walks about Bath and its vicinity, and there are many who perfectly well remember them; the majestic old man, looking not a whit the less impressive for his rusty and dusty brown suit, his bulging boots, his rumpled linen, or his battered hat; and his noisy, soft-haired, quick-glancing, inseparable companion.

Landor's habits were to breakfast at nine, and write principally before noon. His mode of writing was peculiar; he would sit absorbed in apparently vacant thought, but inwardly giving the finishing touches to the verses or the periods which he had last been maturing while he walked or lay awake at night; when he was ready, he would seize suddenly on one of the many scraps of paper and one of the many stumps of swan's-quill that usually lay at hand; and would write down what was in his head hastily, in his rough sloping characters, sprawling or compressed according to the space, and dry the written paper in the ashes. At two he dined, either alone or in the company of some single favoured friend, often on viands which he had himself bought and dressed, and with the accompaniment, when the meal was shared by a second person, of a few glasses of some famous vintage from the family cellar. In the afternoon he walked several miles in all weathers, having a special preference for a village near

Bath, Widcombe, in the beautiful churchyard of which he had now determined that he should be buried. From about seven in the evening, after the simplest possible tea, he generally read till late at night. His walls were covered with bad pictures, which he bought cheap, as formerly from the dealers of Florence, so now from those of Bath, and which his imagination endowed with every sign and every circumstance of authenticity.

In this manner twenty long years went by, during which Landor passed with little abatement of strength from elderly to patriarchal age. As time went on the habits of his life changed almost imperceptibly. The circuit of his walks grew narrower; his visits to London and elsewhere less frequent. His friends of the younger generation, Dickens and Forster especially and without fail, were accustomed every year to run down to Bath and bear him company on his birthday, the 30th of January. Carlyle, whose temper of hero-worship found much that was congenial in Landor's writings, and who delighted in the sterling and vigorous qualities of the man, once made the same journey in order to visit him. I do not know whether the invitation was ever accepted which Landor addressed to another illustrious junior in the following scrap of friendly doggrel.

> I entreat you, Alfred Tennyson,
> Come and share my haunch of venison.
> I have too a bin of claret,
> Good, but better when you share it.
> Tho' 'tis only a small bin,
> There's a stock of it within.
> And as sure as I'm a rhymer,
> Half a butt of Rudesheimer.
> Come; among the sons of men is one
> Welcomer than Alfred Tennyson?

With several of the younger poets and men of letters of those days, Landor's prompt and cordial recognition of literary excellence had put him on terms of the friendliest correspondence and regard. But his friends of his own standing were beginning to fall about him fast.

> We hurry to the river we must cross,
> And swifter downward every footstep wends;
> Happy who reach it ere they count the loss
> Of half their faculties and half their friends."

Thus Landor had written in his ode to Southey in 1833. Six years later Southey's mind had suddenly given way, and in 1843 he died, the name of Landor having been one of the last upon his lips while a glimmering of consciousness remained to him. Of the various tributes to his memory which Landor wrote at the time, that in the form of a vision, beginning

> It was a dream, ah! what is not a dream?

is conspicuous for its beauty, singularity, and tenderness. Francis Hare had died in middle age at Palermo three years earlier. Landor's next great loss was that of his dear friend and loyal admirer Ablett, who died in 1848. Within two years followed the death of Landor's brother Charles, and almost at the same time that of Lady Blessington. The long-impending crash had at last overtaken the establishment in Gore House; the house itself had been sold with all its contents and adjacencies; Count d'Orsay had followed the fortunes of Louis Napoleon to France, whither Lady Blessington soon went also, and where she died in 1850 at St. Germain. Again Landor has commemorated his affection and his sense of his loss in his best vein of graceful and meditative verse. It had been one of Landor's great consolations during a

portion of his life at Bath that Madame de Molandé had been living in that city with her grandchildren. In August, 1851, she too died in France. It was just forty-five years since he had written his lament for the necessity which forced them to part in the days of their early passion :—

> Ianthe, thou art called across the sea,
> A path forbidden *me!*

Let us quote in this connexion, not any of the commemorative lines which Landor wrote on receiving the news of her death, but rather those other verses of grave self-confidence and assured appeal to the ages with which, it does not appear precisely at what date, he set a fitting and final seal on the poetry referring to this episode of his life.

> Well I remember how you smiled
> To see me write your name upon
> The soft sea-sand. . . *O! what a child!*
> *You think you're writing upon stone!*
>
> I have since written what no tide
> Shall ever wash away, what men
> Unborn shall read o'er ocean wide,
> And find Ianthe's name again.

All these deaths would naturally have prepared Landor's mind for his own, had he stood in need of such preparation. But he had long faced that contingency with the same composure with which others are encouraged to face it in so many of his tender and heroic admonitions. Of each successive birthday as it came round he felt as though it might naturally be his last. It was on the morning after his seventy-fifth that he wrote and read aloud before breakfast those lines which he afterwards prefixed to the volume called *Last Fruit* :—

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,
Nature I loved, and, next to nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Infinitely touching seemed his dignified, resigned air and beautiful manly voice to the girlish friend whom he at this time called daughter, and who was standing by as he read; and when he saw how he had brought the tears into her eyes, the old man came across and patted her shoulder, saying, "My good child! I really think you love your father almost as well as Pomero does." But the summons to depart was destined to come to many another yet of those dear to Landor before it came to himself. Within three years after the losses last mentioned, there followed those of his sister Elizabeth and of his ever-faithful friend, the accomplished and pure-hearted Julius Hare. By his lips, as by Southey's, Landor's was one of the last names ever spoken. Next went Kenyon; and next, having lived beyond the common age of his kind, died Pomero, leaving the daily footsteps of the old man more alone than ever.

But it is time that we should go back, and acquaint ourselves with the nature of the work in literature which Landor had been doing during this long autumn of his life in England. His whole literary career may best, I think, be divided into three periods; the first of twenty-six years, from 1795 to 1821; the second of sixteen, from 1821 to 1837; and the third, incredible as it sounds, again of twenty-six, from 1837 to 1863. The first period, as we have seen, was one of experiment only partially felicitous; experiment chiefly in the highest kinds of poetry and in the serious employment of Latin for the purposes of original modern writing; its principal achievements are *Gebir*, *Count Julian*, and the *Idyllia Heroica*.

The second period, from 1821 to 1837, that is from Landor's forty-sixth year to his sixty-second, is the period of his central and greatest work, consisting chiefly of dramatic or quasi-dramatic writings in prose; its principal achievements are the *Imaginary Conversations*, the *Examination of Shakspeare*, *Pericles and Aspasia*, and the *Pentameron*. The third period, upon which we have now entered, includes all the rest of Landor's life from his sixty-second year to his eighty-eighth (1837—1863), and is one of miscellaneous production in many kinds of writing, with a preponderance on the whole of verse. From composition in one form or another Landor never rested long. He declared over and over again his unalterable resolution to give up writing, sometimes in a fit of disgust, sometimes lest as he grew older his powers should fail him unawares. But such resolutions were no sooner made than broken. He worked now to satisfy his own impulse, now to please a friend who was also an editor. In all his literary undertakings throughout this third period, he was in the habit of acting on the advice and with the help of Mr. Forster; advice generally discreet, and help at all times ungrudging. The misfortune is that this most unselfish of friends should have proved also the least self-forgetful of biographers, and the least capable of keeping his own services in the background.

Landor's first important publication during the Bath period was in the form of dramatic verse. Being laid up with a sprained ancle, he occupied himself with composing first one play and then another on the story of Giovanna of Naples. In reality that story is as dark with crime and uncertainty, and as lightning-lit with flashes of romance, and with the spell of beauty accused yet worshipped, as is the story of Mary Queen of Scots

herself. Landor's version of it corresponds to none that will be found in histories. "I am a horrible confounder of historical facts," he writes. "I have usually one history that I have read, and another that I have invented." It was like his chivalry that he as a matter of course took the favourable view of the queen's character, and like his hatred of the Romish priesthood that he made the court confessor, Fra Rupert, the villain of his plot and the contriver of the murder of the queen's husband. The first of his two plays Landor named after the victim of the murder, Andrea of Hungary; the second after the queen herself. The volume appeared in 1839, with a prologue in verse addressed to his young friend "Rose," and an intimation that the profits of the sale were intended to be handed over to Grace Darling. From first to last it was Landor's habit thus to destine to some charitable object the profits which in perfect good faith, and in defiance of reiterated experience, his imagination invariably anticipated from the sale of his works.

Within a couple of years Landor had written and published separately yet another play, which completed this Neapolitan trilogy, and which he called after the name of the villain *Fra Rupert*. The scenes of this trilogy are as deficient in sustained construction and dramatic sequence as *Count Julian* itself. They are pitched in a lower key, and written with more variety of style, than that unmitigated and Titanic tragedy. The character of the young king, with his boorish training and his chivalrous nature, from the neglected soil of which all the latent virtues are drawn forth by the loving wisdom of Giovanna, is a new conception excellently worked out. The figure of Fra Rupert, on the other hand, and that of Rienzi, seem to me types somewhat

boyish and overcharged, the one of brutal coarseness and brutal craft, the other of the demoralization consequent upon the exercise of unlimited power. Among the feminine personages we find, as always in the work of Landor, the most beautifully conceived traits of great-hearted sweetness and devotion; varied, however, in lighter moments with others like the following:—

> Any one now would say you thought me handsome,

exclaims Fiammetta to Boccaccio; a royal princess, be it remembered, to a clerkly and courtly poet. Taken as collections of separate scenes, these plays, unsatisfactory as plays, are full of fine feeling, and of solid activity and ingenuity of conception. A curious point in relation to the second of the three is that it bears in some points of plot and situation a remarkably close resemblance to a tragedy on the same subject published anonymously fifteen years before under the title of *Count Arezzi*. This piece when it appeared had by some been taken for the work of Byron, and for a few days had been on that account in much demand. Its real author had been no other than Landor's own brother Robert. When the resemblance was brought to Walter Landor's notice he seemed utterly unable to account for it, having to the best of his knowledge never either seen or heard of *Count Arezzi*. But he was subject to forgetfulness equally complete when, after the lapse of a few years, passages of his own writing were recited to him; and the impression retained by Mr. Robert Landor was that his brother must have read his play when it first appeared, and forgetting the fact afterwards, preserved portions of it in his mind by an act of purely unconscious recollection. In conduct and construction, indeed, the

plays written by Robert Landor are better than any by his illustrious brother. There was much in common between the two men. Robert Landor had nearly everything of Walter except the passionate energy of his temperament and his genius. He was an admirable scholar, and in his dramas of *Count Arezzi*, *The Earl of Brecon*, *Faith's Fraud*, and *The Ferryman*, and his didactic romances, *The Fountain of Arethusa* and the *Fawn of Sertorius*, he shows himself master of a sound English style and a pure and vigorous vein of feeling and invention. Personally, he was the prince of gentlemen; of a notably fine presence, taller than his eldest brother, and of equally distinguished bearing, without his brother's irascibilities. He had the same taste for seclusion, and lived almost unknown at his beautiful rectory of Birlingham, contented with his modest private fortune, and spending on charity the entire income of his living. After the brothers had parted in 1816 at Como, a coldness had arisen between them, and it was only now, when the elder had returned to England, that they were again on the old terms of mutual affection and respect.

Soon after this trilogy it would appear that Landor wrote the last of his complete plays, the *Siege of Ancona*. This subject, with its high-pitched heroisms, its patriotisms and invincibilities, suited Landor well, and the play, although the least noticed by his critics, is I think upon the whole his best. I do not know whether it was of these four dramas and of Count Julian in especial, or of all Landor's dramatic and quasi-dramatic writings together, that Mr. Browning was thinking when a few years later he dedicated to Landor, as "a great dramatic poet," the volume containing his own two plays of *Luria* and the *Soul's Tragedy*. The letter written by the elder poet in

acknowledgment of this tribute from the younger is so characteristic alike of his genial friendliness to his brother authors, and of the broad and manly justice of his habitual criticisms both on himself and others, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting it.

Accept my thanks for the richest of Easter offerings made to any one for many years. I staid at home last evening on purpose to read *Luria*, and if I lost any good music (as I certainly did) I was well compensated in kind. To-day I intend to devote the rainy hours entirely to *The Soul's Tragedy*. I wonder whether I shall find it as excellent as *Luria*. You have conferred too high a distinction on me in your graceful inscription. I am more of a dramatist in prose than in poetry. My imagination, like my heart, has always been with the women, I mean the young, for I cannot separate that adjective from that substantive. This has taught me above all things the immeasurable superiority of Shakespeare. His women raise him to it. I mean the *immensity* of the superiority; the superiority would exist without. I am sometimes ready to shed tears at his degradation in Comedy. I would almost have given the first joint of my fore-finger rather than he should have written, for instance, such trash as that in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. His wit is pounded, and spiced, and potted, and covered with rancidity at last. A glass of champagne at Molière's is very refreshing after this British spirit. Go on and pass *us* poor devils! If you do not go far ahead of me, I will crack my whip at you and make you spring forward So to use a phrase of Queen Elizabeth,

"Yours as you demean yourself,"

W. LANDOR.

Returning to the years 1839-42, Landor in this interval, besides his trilogy of plays, published in Mr. Forster's review, and at his request, *Criticisms* in his ripest and soundest vein, on Theocritus, Catullus, and Petrarch; and by the advice of the same friend withheld from publication a reply to an adverse review of the

Pentameron which he at the time, apparently in error, attributed to Hallam. In this reply Landor had both defended and supplemented the view of Dante which he had put forward in the Decameron, and had in his grandest manner set forth what he conceived to be the qualifications necessary for the right appreciation of that master:—

> Mr. Landor has no more questioned the sublimity or the profoundness of Dante, than his readers will question whether he or his critic is the more competent to measure them. To judge properly and comprehensively of Dante, first the poetical mind is requisite; then, patient industry in exploring the works of his contemporaries, and in going back occasionally to those volumes of the schoolmen which lie dormant in the libraries of his native city. Profitable too are excursions in Val d'Arno and Val d'Elsa, and in those deep recesses of the Apennines where the elder language is yet abiding in its rigid strength and fresh austerity. Twenty years and unbroken leisure have afforded to Mr. Landor a small portion of such advantages, at least of the latter; a thousand could pour none effectually into this *pertusum vas.*

In the three or four years following the production of these plays and criticisms, Landor was occupied almost entirely in preparing for press, with the indefatigable help of Mr. Forster, a collected edition of his writings. It was in 1846 that this edition at length appeared. It contained the whole mass of Landor's work compressed into two tall volumes in royal octavo, with the text printed in double columns; an unattractive and inconvenient arrangement. The principal novelties in the collection were, first, the supplementary *Conversations* recovered from the light-hearted custody of Mr. Willis, together with others written during the last fifteen years, forty-two in all; and next the *Hellenics;* consisting of translations into English

blank verse, undertaken in the first instance at the suggestion of Lady Blessington, of those *Idyllia* of Landor's in Latin the first edition of which had been printed at Oxford in 1814, and the second at Pisa in 1820; together with some others written originally in English. The dedications of the original *Conversations* were not reprinted, several of the patriots and liberators to whom they were addressed having in the interval precipitated themselves in Landor's esteem from the pinnacle of glory to the abyss of shame. To the two volumes was prefixed instead a brief inscription addressed in terms of grateful affection to Julius Hare and John Forster; to the latter of whom a second address in verse brought the book to a close.

So vast and so diversified a mass of energetic thinking and masterly writing it would within the compass of any other two volumes be hard to find. But one whole class of Landor's work, and his own favourite class, had found no place in them, I mean his work in Latin, and accordingly he next set about collecting, correcting, and in part rewriting his productions in that language, both prose and verse. By dint of infinite pains and zeal on his own part and on that of Mr. Forster, this final edition of his Latin writings was got through the press in 1847, in the shape of a small closely printed volume called *Poemata et Inscriptiones.* In the meantime a few lovers of poetry had been much struck by the choice and singular quality of the *Hellenics.* Landor was encouraged to reprint these poems separately, and in the course of this same year they were issued by the house of Moxon, with additions and revisions, in one of those small volumes in green cloth which the muse of Mr. Tennyson has so long made welcome and familiar to our eyes.

The massive individuality of Landor's mind was accompanied, as we have seen, by a many-sided power of historical sympathy, which made him at home not in one only but in several, and those the most dissimilar, ages of the past. The strenuous gravity and heroic independence of Puritan England had entered into his imaginative being, as well as the contented grace and harmonious self-possession of ancient Hellas. But of all things he was perhaps the most of a Greek at heart. His freedom from any tincture of mysticism, his love of unconfused shapes and outlines, his easy dismissal of the unfathomable and the unknown, and steady concentration of the mind upon the purely human facts of existence, its natural sorrows and natural consolations, all helped him to find in the life of ancient Greece a charm without alloy, and in her songs and her philosophies a beauty and a wisdom without shortcoming. Adequate scholarship, and a close literary familiarity with the Greek writers, fortified this natural sympathy with the knowledge which was wanting to Keats, whose flashes of luminous and enraptured insight into things Hellenic are for want of such knowledge lacking in coherency and in assurance. Landor on his part is without Keats's gift, the born poet's gift, of creative, untaught felicity in epithet and language; his power over language is of another kind, more systematic, trained, and regular. But in dealing with things Hellenic Landor strikes generally with complete assurance the true imaginative note. This is equally the case whether, as in *Pericles and Aspasia*, and in his dialogues of ancient philosophers and statesmen, he makes the Greeks themselves extol the glories of their race, or whether he trusts the exposition of those glories to the mouths of modern speakers, as when Michelangelo is made to remind Vittoria Colonna

of the conquests of the race in war and art, of Salamis and the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, together :—

> The conquerors of kings until then omnipotent, kings who had trampled on the towers of Babylon and had shaken the eternal sanctuaries of Thebes, the conquerors of those kings bowed their olive-crowned heads to the sceptre of Destiny, and their tears flowed profusely over the immeasurable wilderness of human woes.

Hear, again, how Alfieri is made to correct the false taste of another Italian poet in his description of Pluto, and to draw in its place the true Greek picture of that god and of his kingdom.

> Does this describe the brother of Jupiter? does it not rather the devils of our carneval, than him at whose side, upon asphodel and amaranth, the sweet Persephone sits pensively contented, in that deep motionless quiet, which mortals pity and which the gods enjoy; than him who, under the umbrage of Elysium, gazes at once upon all the beauties that on earth were separated by times and countries . . Helena and Eriphyle, Polyxena and Hermione, Deidamia and Deianira, Leda and Omphale, Atalanta and Cydippe, Laodamia, with her arm around the neck of a fond youth, whom she still seems afraid of losing, and apart, the daughters of Niobe, though now in smiles, still clinging to their parent; and many thousands more, each of whom is worth the dominions, once envied, of both brothers?

Landor was a less accomplished master in verse than prose, and we hardly find in the *Hellenics* anything equal to the lovely interlinked cadences, and the assured imaginative ease and justice, of passages like this. What we do find is an extreme, sometimes an excessive, simplicity and reserve both of rhythm and language, conveying, in many instances at least, a delightful succession of classical images; images not only lucid

in themselves, but more lucidly and intelligibly connected than had been Landor's wont in his earlier narrative poetry. The *Hamadryad* and its sequel, *Acon and Rhodope*, of which no Latin original had been first composed, these with *Enallos and Cymodameia* are, I think, the choicest examples of the vein; one or two of the others, such as the *Altar of Modesty*, had better have been left in their original Latin. The gem, however, of the volume, is to my mind not any one of the mythologic tales or idyls, but the following brief, exquisitely wrought scene of household mourning. The husband, Elpenor, stands by the bedside of the wife, Artemidora, and speaks :—

"Artemidora! Gods invisible,
While thou wert lying faint along the couch,
Have tied the sandals to thy slender feet,
And stand beside thee, ready to convey
Thy weary steps where other rivers flow.
Refreshing shades will waft thy weariness
Away, and voices like thy own come near
And nearer, and solicit an embrace."
Artemidora sigh'd, and would have prest
The hand now pressing hers, but was too weak.
Iris stood over her dark hair unseen
While thus Elpenor spake. He lookt into
Eyes that had given light and life erewhile
To those above them, but now dim with tears
And wakefulness. Again he spake of joy
Eternal. At that word, that sad word, *joy*,
Faithful and fond her bosom heaved once more:
Her head fell back: and now a loud deep sob
'Swell'd through the darken'd chamber; 'twas not hers.

Landor can never have seen those beautiful and characteristic works of Attic sculpture, the funeral monuments in which the death of the beloved is shadowed forth in a group representing, only with a touch of added

solemnity in the expressions, his or her preparations for departure upon an ordinary journey or an ordinary day's work. But his poem is conceived in the very spirit of those sculptures. Like all his best work, it has to be read repeatedly and slowly before it will be found to have yielded up the full depth and tenderness of its meanings. The beauty of the dying woman implied, not described; the gentle dealings with her of the unseen messenger of the gods who has placed the sandals about her feet in sleep; the solicitude of the husband, who as long as she breathes will speak to her only words of comfort; his worship, which when he would tell her of the voices that will greet her beyond the tomb, can find no words to express their sweetness except by calling them "like her own;" the pressure with which she would, but cannot, answer him; the quiver of the heart with which she expires upon the mention and the idea of joy—for what are those unknown and uncompanioned joys to her?—the bursting of the floodgates of his grief when there is no longer any reason for restraining it; these things are conceived with that depth and chastity of tenderness, that instinctive beauty in pathos, which Landor shares with none but the greatest masters of the human heart. If we are to let ourselves notice the presence of imperfections or mannerisms in so beautiful a piece of work and of feeling, it will be to point out the mode (habitual with Landor) in which the pronouns are made to do more work than they can well bear in the words "those above them;" meaning the eyes of Elpenor, now, at the moment of the description, occupying a position above those of his wife, inasmuch as she is lying on the sick-bed and he standing over her. This is an instance of Landor's habit of excessive condensation; just as the last lines contain an instance of his

habit of needlessly avoiding, in narrative, the main fact of a situation, and relating instead some result or concomitant of the situation from which the reader is required to infer its main fact for himself.

To this 1847 edition of the *Hellenics* Landor prefixed a dedication in capital letters, which is a monument at once of the magnificence of his prose style and of the sanguine political enthusiasm which remained proof in him against every disenchantment. The liberal Cardinal Mastai had just been elected Pope as Pio Nono, and for a moment the eyes of all Europe were turned in hope towards the new pontiff. To him accordingly Landor inscribed his book. After a contrast of his opportunities and his purposes with those of Louis Philippe, the inscription concludes :—

> Cunning is not wisdom; prevarication is not policy; and (novel as the notion is, it is equally true) armies are not strength: Acre and Waterloo show it, and the flames of the Kremlin and the solitudes of Fontainbleau. One honest man, one wise man, one peaceful man, commands a hundred millions, without a baton and without a charger. He wants no fortress to protect him: he stands higher than any citadel can raise him, brightly conspicuous to the most distant nations, God's servant by election, God's image by beneficence.

The events of the next few years revived in Landor all the emotions of his earlier manhood. The year 1848 seemed to him like another and more hopeful year 1821. The principles of popular government and of despotism once more encountered each other in the death-grapple. The struggle was sharper than the last had been; a greater number of tyrannies reeled and tottered, and for a longer time; but the final defeat was, at least it seemed to be, not less crushing, nor the final disappointment less com-

plete. Against the renegadoes of liberty, such as the Pope himself and Louis Napoleon, there were no bounds to Landor's indignation. By the abilities and friendliness of the latter he had been in personal intercourse at Gore House quite won, and, foreseeing after the revolution of 1848 that he would soon be called to the absolute government of his country, was nevertheless inclined to believe in his integrity of purpose. But the first shot fired against republican Rome in the name of republican France and by the authority of her President "parted us," as Landor wrote "for ever," and the verses in which Landor by-and-by denounced the refusal of the right of asylum to Kossuth seem by their concentrated fire of scorn and indignation to anticipate the *Châtiments* of Victor Hugo. Kossuth, Manin, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Türr, these, and especially Kossuth, are the great heroes of Landor's admiration now. He wrote a small, now almost undiscoverable, volume of *Italics* in verse, besides several new political *Conversations;* of Garibaldi with Mazzini; of King Carlo-Alberto with the Princess Belgioioso; and others again of reactionary cardinals and ministers with each other. Even after the movement of 1848 and 1849 had been for the time being diverted or utterly suppressed, Landor continued to be much preoccupied with questions of policy and government. In 1851 he published a series of letters on priestcraft and ecclesiastical organization, entitled *Popery, British and Foreign*, and about the same time a series of ten *Letters to Cardinal Wiseman.* In 1854 the approach of the Crimean war gave rise in the old man, now in his eightieth year, to reflexions on the necessity of curbing the power of Russia; on the possibility of reconstituting the kingdom of Poland; and on the sagacity and probable achievements

of Louis Napoleon, in whom he for a short time experienced a brief return of confidence. These reflexions he cast into the shape of *Letters*, written nominally by an American travelling in England to a friend at home, and dedicated to Mr. Gladstone, with the words, "Sir, of all whom we have been trusting, you alone have never deceived us. Together with the confidence, the power of England is in your hands. May those hands, for the benefit of your country and of the world, be as strong as they are pure."

Three years later Landor addressed to Emerson a brief letter, the essence of proud urbanity and compendious force, in which he rectified several of that writer's observations concerning himself in the *English Traits*, and took occasion, amidst other strokes of the most serene autobiographical candour, to state exactly his sentiments in regard to tyrannicide. After speaking of Alfieri, Landor goes on:—

> Had he been living in these latter days, his bitterness would have overflowed not on France alone, nor Austria in addition, the two beasts that have torn Italy in pieces, and are growling over her bones; but more, and more justly, on those constitutional governments which, by abetting, have aided them in their ingressions and incursions. We English are the most censurable of all . . . . The ministers of England have signed that *Holy Alliance* which delivered every free State to the domination of arbitrary and irresponsible despots. The ministers of England have entered more recently into treaties with usurpers and assassins. And now, forsooth, it is called *assassination* to remove from the earth an assassin; the assassin of thousands; an outlaw, the subverter of his country's, and even of his own, laws. The valiant and the wise of old thought differently.

Backed by their authority, Landor goes on to contend that tyrannicide involves less misery than war, and to

acknowledge that he for one holds and ever will hold that "the removal of an evil at the least possible cost is best."

Some time before this, in 1853, two new volumes of Landor's writing had been put forth. One was simply a detached reprint of those of his imaginary conversations in which the speakers were ancient Greeks and Romans: *Conversations of the Greeks and Romans* the volume was called, and its dedication to Charles Dickens, in which he congratulates his friend above all things on his labours "in breaking up and cultivating the unreclaimed wastes of humanity," is another example of the combined warmth and heartiness of his friendships and the catholic justice of his appreciations. Landor's second volume of 1853, in appearance uniform with the last-named, was called by him *The Last Fruit off an Old Tree.* It was dedicated to the Marchese d'Azeglio, and to the title-page was prefixed that quatrain of Landor's upon his seventy-fifth birthday, which I have already quoted (p. 183). It contained eighteen new *Conversations*, most of them modern and political, besides a number of the prose pieces published during the past six years in pamphlets and newspapers. These included, besides the pieces of which mention has been made already, an evidence of Landor's undecaying feeling towards the memory of Southey, in the shape of a remonstrance addressed to Lord Brougham on the public neglect both of that memory itself, and of the person of the poet's surviving son. Of himself Landor in this letter gives the monumental and just description:—"I claim no place in the world of letters; I am alone, and will be alone, as long as I live, and after." The poetry which concludes the volume of *Last Fruit* is, Landor says, "what I wish the prose could have been, mostly panegyrical;" it consists, that is to

say, in great part, of "epistles" and other pieces addressed in the spirit of friendly discussion or more friendly praise to his comrades and juniors in the craft of letters. Last of all came five detached "scenes" in verse on the subject of the Cenci; scenes written not in rivalry, still less in any implied depreciation, of the work of Shelley, but simply taking up the theme afresh, as it were by a different handle and from a different side.

The two dramatic dialogues in *Last Fruit*,—those of Leonora di Este, the beloved of Tasso, with Tasso's confessor, and of Admiral Blake with his brother Humphrey,—are among the finest Landor ever wrote; the modern political, whether laudatory or satiric in their purport, are for the most part tedious enough. A long conversation between Landor himself and Archdeacon Hare, represented as taking place in the course of a walk at Hurstmonceaux, is the ripest and most interesting of that class which began thirty years before with the first dialogue of Johnson and Horne Tooke. The discussion turns almost entirely on technical points of English literature and the English language. In it among other things Landor resumes, defends, and illustrates those principles of spelling which he had founded long ago on analogy and on the study of the early English writers, and which he had insisted on actually putting into practice, to the distraction of his printers, in a large proportion of his published writings. Most of his readers had been accustomed to regard his usage in these matters as mere innovations dictated by arbitrary whim. Landor showed that he was guided not by whim but by principle, and denied that his changes were innovations at all. He knew that the current practice of any age in English spelling was purely a matter of accident and custom; and to the accident and custom of his own

age he refused to bow in cases where he found those of another to be preferable. He drew up lists of those words which he found habitually spelt by any of the earlier writers, from Chaucer down, in a manner more consistent with derivation, with sound, or with analogy, than by the moderns. Thus a regard to derivation made him write *exclame*, *proclame*, *strategem*, instead of exclaim, proclaim, stratagem; a regard to sound, *foren*, *sovran*, *interr*, instead of foreign, sovereign, inter; to analogy, *embassador*, or else why embassy? *receit*, or else why deceit and conceit? *grandor* or *grandour*, or else why honour, labour, and not honneur, labeur, and so on with the rest? Fidelity to the spoken sound also made Landor banish the termination *ed* from the preterites and past participles of verbs ending with sibilant, or soft labial or guttural, consonants, and write *wisht*, *dropt*, *lookt*, instead of wished, dropped, looked. In this last usage Landor was followed by the brothers Hare and by many of those on whom the Hares had influence; including, as we all know, no less a master than Mr. Tennyson. Custom, reasonable or other, has proved too strong to yield to others of Landor's proposed reforms. But for the student it is not easy to find better reading, a more instructive array of instances, or a more pointed and clenching method of presenting arguments, than are contained in his discussions on these mechanical and technical matters of language. Landor hated to be confounded with the so-called phonetic reformers of spelling, as Hartley Coleridge first, and afterwards one or two others, had confounded him. In this matter as in others he regarded himself essentially as a conservative, and all he proposed was to select for imitation and revival such portions of the practice of the best writers, from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, as seemed on

examination to be most correct and rational. From the orthography of words the discussion passes on to the words themselves, and we find Landor inveighing in his most vigorous vein against the colloquial corruptions which he conceived to be defiling every day the fountains of his mother tongue. "Humbug" was a word which he barely agreed to tolerate; for "pluck," "sham," "traps" (meaning luggage), "giant trees," "monster meetings," "palmy days," and many other phrases of contemporary slang or contemporary fine writing, he had no toleration whatever. He felt like a sentinel keeping guard over the honour and integrity of the English language. And for such a post no man was better fitted either by knowledge or reflection. So massive and minute a literary acquaintance with his mother tongue, combined with so jealous and sensitive an instinct in its verbal criticism, have probably never existed in any other man. Nor was there ever a time when a sentinel was more needed. Even men of genius and of just popularity, a Carlyle, a Dickens, a Macaulay, had each in his way accustomed the millions of English-speaking and English-reading men to find their language forced into all manner of startling or glittering usages, of extravagant or unquiet forms and devices. There were few writers, and of these Landor was the foremost, who adhered to a classical regularity of language and to a classical composure and restraint of style. Landor was rigorous in rejecting from his vocabulary all words but such as had stood the test of time. He was perhaps the most exact of all English writers in observing the laws of logical and grammatical construction. His style was not founded on that of any master, but included, both in vocabulary and in structure, the resources of all the best English prose writers, from Sir

Thomas Browne and Milton to Horace Walpole and Lord Chesterfield. He was not given, except for special purposes, to the use of strong monosyllables, or of the curt Teutonic English which has been brought into fashion in our own time, but preferred rather, though not pedantically, the polysyllabic articulation of words derived from the Latin.

In all this, however, Landor was as a voice crying in the wilderness. It is amazing now, and it was amazing then, that the grand old preacher should have so few listeners. The English-reading public had taken him at his word. They left him where he was content to remain, alone. They gave him no place in the world of letters, while they excited themselves to passion over the work of scores of lesser men. Less attention was paid to him in England than in America, where about this time, 1856, a *Selection* of detached thoughts and sentences from the *Conversations* was published at Boston, with an admirable critical introduction by Mr. Hilliard. It is incredible, but true, that within three years of the publication of the *Last Fruit* an elaborate article on English prose style, appearing in an English magazine to which Landor was himself an occasional contributor, should have actually contained no mention of his name at all. This neglect did not trouble him in the least, nor did he regard with a shadow of envy the applause bestowed on others. "Caring not a straw for popularity, and little more for fame," he simply uttered from time to time the thoughts that were in him in the language which he found most fit. From a few indeed of those who themselves stood nearest him in power and art, every such utterance as it appeared drew forth a fresh tribute of homage. In 1856 Landor published in a separate pamphlet (the "proceeds" destined,

as of old, to a specified purpose of charity), a set of *Scenes from the study*; scenes again in verse, and again drawn fearlessly from a domain where the greatest had been at work before him. The subject was Antony and Cleopatra. "What an undaunted soul before his eighty years," writes Mrs. Browning after reading them, "and how good for all other souls to contemplate." Still, in the same year, he put some of his most pregnant thoughts on language, and especially, strange as it may seem, on the English language, into a dialogue between Alfieri and Metastasio, published in *Fraser's Magazine*. "Do you think the grand old Pagan wrote that piece just now?" asks Carlyle in a letter written at the time. "The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians! The unsubduable old Roman!"

But alas! there came before long news of the old Roman which could not but make those who loved and honoured him regret that he had not succumbed earlier to the common lot. Of all Landor's wild collisions with the world of fact, the most melancholy and the most notorious befell him now in his patriarchal age. In 1856, the year of the *Letter to Emerson* and the *Scenes for the Study*, he had paid one of his now infrequent visits to London; had joined a party of friends at the Crystal Palace, and been as vigorous and as whimsical in his talk as ever. From about the beginning of the next year, 1857, there seemed to be coming over him a change for the worse. His letters bespoke both physical decay and mental disturbance. Worse followed; it was found that he had allowed himself to be dragged headlong into a miserable and compromising quarrel between two ladies at Bath. One of these was the wife of a clergyman, the other a young girl, her bosom friend until

the quarrel arose; both had been very intimate with Landor during the last few years. To the younger he, with his royal and inveterate love of giving, had lately made over a small legacy in money, which had been left him as a token of friendship by Kenyon. In the course of the quarrel the elder lady, who had shortly before accepted help from the younger out of Landor's gift, took exception to the nature of her intimacy with the giver. Landor on his part utterly lost control of himself. Regarding himself as the champion of innocent youth against an abominable combination of fraud and calumny, in the frenzy of his indignant imagination he remembered or invented all kinds of previous malpractices against the foe. He betook himself to his old insane weapons, and both in print and writing launched invectives against her in an ultra-Roman taste. He wrote odious letters to her husband. Legal steps being set on foot to restrain him, his unfailing friend Forster came down to see what could be done. By his persuasions, joined to those of Landor's own lawyers, the enraged old man was with difficulty induced to sign an apology, coupled with an undertaking not to repeat his offence. But Mr. Forster had felt, at the time when this engagement was made, that Landor could hardly be trusted to remember or observe it. Age, illness, and indignation had rendered him for the time being uncontrollable and irresponsible. For the first time in more than twenty years he proceeded to act in defiance of Mr. Forster's advice in a matter of publication. Having recovered from the hostile party in the dispute a number of scraps in verse, the least considered and least valuable that he had thrown off during recent years, he entrusted them to an Edinburgh house to be sent to press, under the plea that copies of them were abroad, and would be made

public by others if not by himself. The volume appeared early in 1858, under the title *Dry sticks, fagoted by W. S. Landor;* "by the late W. S. Landor," the old man had at first insisted that the title should run. The book was made up of the recovered scraps and epigrams in question; with a few others in Latin; besides a reprint, after an "occultation," as Landor put it, "of sixty years," of the *Poems from the Arabic and Persian;* and a number of complimentary pieces addressed by various writers to himself. Unhappily the old man had not been able to restrain himself from adding also, in defiance of his signed engagement, one or two of his worst lampoons against his enemy. The enemy seems to have been nothing loth to take advantage of the fault, and a suit for damages was immediately set on foot. Before it came on Landor had a stroke, which left him insensible for forty-eight hours, and for some weeks afterwards he hung between life and death. His extraordinary strength, however, carried him through, and he came to himself better both in body and mind after his illness. The trial was in the meantime coming on at the August assize. Practically there could be no defence; the attacks were on the face of them libellous, and Landor's friends advised him to go abroad, in order if possible to protect himself against the consequences of the inevitable verdict; first selling his personal property and pictures, and making a formal transfer of all his real property to his eldest son. This was accordingly done, and just before the trial came on the forlorn old man set out to leave his native land once more.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECOND EXILE AND LAST DAYS—HEROIC IDYLS—DEATH.
(1858—1864.)

On his way to the Continent, Landor arrived suddenly at Mr. Forster's house, where Dickens and some others were at dinner. Dickens left the table to see him, expecting naturally to find him broken and cast down. But the old man's thoughts were far away; he seemed as though no ugly or infuriating realities had any existence for him, and sat talking in his most genial vein, principally about Latin poetry. "I would not blot him out, in his tender gallantry, as he sat upon his bed at Forster's that night, for a million of wild mistakes at eighty-four years of age;" so wrote the manly-hearted and understanding witness who then saw Landor for the last time. This was on the 12th of July, 1858. The trial came on at Gloucester in the next month, and the jury brought in a verdict of 1000*l.* damages against the defendant.

Stricken but unsubdued, his strength and his intellectual faculties even in some slight degree restored, Landor had in the meantime travelled as far as Genoa, where it was his intention to take up his abode. Advice well meant but injudicious prevailed on him to change his plan. He pushed on to Fiesole, and rejoined his family in the villa which he had once loved so well, and which

it was just three and twenty years ago since he had left. At first he received some degree of contentment and even pleasure from his return to his old Italian home; and it is affecting to read the verses in which the old man's sense of dignity and high desert struggles invincibly with the consciousness of his humiliation, and he endeavours to find in the charm of his present surroundings a consolation for his late disasters:—

> If I extoll'd the virtuous and the wise,
> The brave and beautiful, and well discern'd
> Their features as they fixt their eyes on mine,
> If I have won a kindness never wooed,
> Could I foresee that . . fallen among thieves,
> Despoil'd, halt, wounded . . . tramping traffickers
> Should throw their dirt upon me, not without
> Some small sharp pebbles carefully inclosed?
> However, from one crime they are exempt;
> They do not strike a brother, striking *me*.
> This breathes o'er me a cool serenity,
> O'er me divided from old friends, in lands
> Pleasant, if aught without old friends can please,
> Where round their lowly turf-built terraces
> Grey olives twinkle in this wintery sun,
> And crimson light invests yon quarried cliff,
> And central towers from distant villas peer
> Until Arezzo's ridges intervene.

But these consolations were not destined to endure. Landor's fate had still fresh trials in reserve. The scandal of the Bath affair made some of his old friends in Florence look coldly on him, and among them the English minister, Lord Normanby. At this the old man was wounded to the quick, and if the whole case were not so deeply melancholy, we might well smile at the majestic document in which he presently relieved his feelings:—

"My Lord,—Now I am recovering from an illness of several

months' duration, aggravated no little by your lordship's rude reception of me at the Cascine, in presence of my family and innumerable Florentines, I must remind you in the gentlest terms of the occurrence.

We are both of us old men, my lord, and are verging on decrepitude and imbecility, else my note might be more energetic. I am not inobservant of distinctions. You by the favour of a minister are Marquis of Normanby, I by the grace of God am

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

But worse than any slight inflicted by a minister were the crosses which Landor found that he had to endure at home. Time had done nothing to diminish, but rather everything to increase, the incompatibilities between himself and those of his household. By settlement, deed of gift, deed of transfer, or otherwise, Landor had now made over all his property to his wife and children; the bulk of it to his eldest son; and except for a small sum in ready money which he had brought with him, he was absolutely dependent upon his family for the means of subsistence. Doubtless he was a wilful and unmanageable inmate in the house to which he had so long been a stranger. None the less was it the obvious duty of those nearest him, and enriched at his expense, either to make his life, at whatever cost of compliance and forbearance, endurable to him under their common roof, or else to provide him with the means of living in his own way elsewhere. It seems only too certain that they made no serious or patient attempt to do the former; and the latter when Landor desired it they declined to do. Pathetic, almost tragic, was the portion of the old man in those days, a Lear who found no kindness from his own. Thrice he left the villa with the determination to live by himself in Florence; but his wish was not indulged, and

thrice he was brought back to the home which was no home for him, and where he was dealt with neither generously nor gently. The fourth time he presented himself in the house of Mr. Browning with only a few pauls in his pocket, declaring that nothing should ever induce him to return.

Mr. Browning, an interview with the family at the villa having satisfied him that reconciliation or return was indeed past question, put himself at once in communication with Mr. Forster and with Landor's brothers in England. The latter instantly undertook to supply the needs of their eldest brother during the remainder of his life. Thenceforth an income sufficient for his frugal wants was forwarded regularly for his use through the friend who had thus come forward at his need. To Mr. Browning's respectful and judicious guidance Landor showed himself docile from the first. Removed from the inflictions, real and imaginary, of his life at Fiesole, he became another man, and at times still seemed to those about him like the old Landor at his best. It was in July, 1859, that the new arrangements for his life were made. The remainder of that summer he spent at Siena, first as the guest of Mr. Story, the American sculptor and poet, next in a cottage rented for him by Mr. Browning near his own. In the autumn of the same year Landor removed to a set of apartments in the Via Nunziatina in Florence, close to the Casa Guidi, in a house kept by a former servant of Mrs. Browning's, an Englishwoman married to an Italian. Here he continued to live during the five years that yet remained to him. He was often susceptible, querulous, unreasonable, and full of imaginings. The Bath trial and its consequences pressed upon his mind with a sense of bewildering injury which at times stung him almost to

madness. The deed of transfer to his eldest son had on appeal been in so far practically set aside, that the damages awarded by the jury had after all to be paid. Landor was always scheming how he might clear his character by establishing the true facts of the case; that is to say, by repeating the self-same charges the publication of which had already cost him so much. He caused a "vindication" to be printed, and wrote pressing Mr. Forster to help him to get it made public. When his instances to this effect were received with silence or remonstrance, he imagined grievances against even that proved and devoted friend, and suspended communications with him for a time. The delay which ensued in the issue of a new edition of his *Hellenics*, prepared partly before he left England and partly while he was still at Fiesole, exasperated him much as similar delays had exasperated him of old, and led, as of old, to the burning in a moment of irritation of a quantity of literary materials that lay by him.

Notwithstanding all these private self-tormentings, and indignant lashings of the wounded lion in his retreat, he remained to his small circle of friends and visitors in Florence a figure the most venerable and the most impressive. Although weaker in all ways, he retained all his ancient distinction, and many of his ancient habits. He had found a successor to Pomero in the shape of another dog of the same breed which had been given him by Mr. Story. The name of this new pet was Giallo, and Giallo became to Landor's last days all that Pomero had been before. Landor, who in the first two or three of these years at Florence still contrived to walk to a moderate extent, became known to the new generation of Florentines as the old man with the beautiful dog, *il vecchio con quel bel canino*. He

frequented too, again, his old haunts among the picture-dealers, and bought out of his slender pittance almost as many bad pictures as of yore. The occasional society and homage of some old friends and some new prevented his life from being too solitary. The death of Mrs. Browning in 1861, and her husband's consequent departure for England, took away from him his best friends of all. He had found also a great pleasure in the society of a young American lady, Miss Kate Field, who has given us an affectionate portrait of the old man in these declining days. Almost toothless now, and partially deaf, his appearance was changed by the addition of a flowing and snow-white beard. This, every one said, made him look more like an old lion than ever, and he liked, as he had always liked, to be reminded of the resemblance. He could still be royal company when he pleased. He taught his young American friend Latin, and opened out for her with delight the still abundant treasures of his mind. His memory for new friends and for names in general, as well as for recent events, had become uncertain; but his remoter recollections, his stories, as he used to call them, "of the year one," were as vivid and full of power as ever. It produced upon his hearers an effect almost of awe to listen to this heroic survivor of another age, whose talk, during the last ministry of Lord Palmerston and on the eve of the American war of Secession, would run on things which he remembered under the first ministry of Pitt, or as a child during the American war of Independence. Garibaldi was the hero of his old age as Washington had been the hero of his youth. He followed with passionate interest the progress of Italian emancipation. He insisted one day that his watch should be pawned and the proceeds given to the fund in aid of Garibaldi's wounded. He was more in-

dignant than ever with his old acquaintance, the French Emperor, for his treacherous dealings with the Italian nation. He wrote political epigrams in English and political odes in Latin; an address in English to the Sicilians; and in far from faultless Italian a dialogue between Savonarola and the Prior of St. Mark's—the proceeds to go, as the watch had only been prevented by the care of his friends from going, for the benefit of Garibaldi's wounded.

In these days the books which the old man liked best to read were novels, and he got from the library and read with delight some of those of Trollope and of his old friend G. P. R. James, speaking and writing of the latter in particular with an extravagant partiality of praise. He would often talk of books, and of the technical matters of language and the literary art, with all his old mastery and decision. On such points he was much given to quoting the opinion of his dog Giallo. Giallo, he said, was the best of critics as well as the most delightful of companions, and it was not "I," but "Giallo and I," who paid visits or entertained views on politics and literature. Giallo was the subject of many verses, extemporary and other. "Why, Giallo," said the old man one day, "your nose is hot,

> But he is foolish who supposes
> Dogs are ill that have hot noses."

Here are some unpublished lines of great feeling, written on the same theme, which I find under date of Aug. 1, 1860.

> Giallo! I shall not see thee dead,
> Nor raise a stone above thy head,
> For I shall go some years before,
> Where thou wilt leap at me no more,
> Nor bark, as now, to make me mind,
> Asking me, am I deaf or blind:

No, Giallo, but I shall be soon,
And thou wilt scratch my turf and moan.

Humorous denunciations of modern slang and modern ill-manners formed also a considerable part of Landor's talk in these days. His own manners remained, while strength was left, as fine as ever. He was full of beautiful complimentary speeches, of quick and graceful retorts, of simple old-fashioned presents and attentions. He would always see his lady friends to the door, and help them into their carriage bare-headed. If he accompanied them, as he sometimes did, on their drives, he would always take his place on the back seat. One day they were deeply touched by his expression of a wish to drive up to the gate of the Fiesolan villa, and by the look of wistfulness which came over his noble aged face as he sat in silence, gazing at that alienated home for the last time.

His American friends before long departed too, and the old man was left with less company than ever, except that of Giallo, and of his own thoughts and memories. He continued at intervals to take pleasure in the society of Mr. Robert, now Earl, Lytton, and in that of the son of his old friend Francis Hare, to whom he had been full of kindness and of attention throughout his boyhood. Little by little the fire of life sank lower in him. He grew deafer and deafer, so that at last the visits of his old friend Kirkup, now also deaf, almost ceased to give him pleasure. He suffered more and more from cough, dizziness, and disinclination for food. He became less and less conscious of outward and present facts, or conscious of them only for moments of brief and half-bewildered awakening. His letters of these years are short, and more abrupt than ever, though each proposition they contain, no matter how trivial its subject, is generally

as vigorous and as stately in form as of old. From 1861 to 1863 Mr. Browning was Landor's principal correspondent. In the last year of his life he ceased to remember his unreasonable grievance against Mr. Forster, and wrote to him with all his old warmth and gratefulness of affection, expressly confirming, among other things, the choice by which he had long ago designated him as his biographer and literary executor.

In his inward life and the customary operations of his mind, Landor continued almost to the last to retain an astonishing and unquenchable vigour. He was continually taking up pen and paper in the old sudden way to put down fragments that he had been composing whether in verse or prose, in English or in Latin. "I am sometimes at a loss for an English word," he said to a friend about this time, "never for a Latin." Two volumes of his writing, chiefly in verse, appeared after his return to Italy. The first of these, long delayed in the press, was a second and enlarged edition of the *Hellenics* of 1847. Of the idyls contained in the earlier edition, the majority here appear again, some having been completely re-written, that is to say re-translated from the original Latin, in the interval. One or two pieces which appeared in the old volume are omitted, and among those introduced for the first time are several Greek scenes and idyls, including metrical versions of two of his former prose dialogues, *Achilles and Helena*, and *Peleus and Thetis*, and one or two pieces not belonging to the Greek cycle at all. The old dedication to Pio Nono is replaced by one to Sir William Napier, and this is followed by a graceful invocation to the Muses to "come back home"—home, that is, from less congenial haunts to the scenes and the memories of Hellas. On the whole, this edition of the

Hellenics is neither in form nor in substance an improvement of that in 1847. It was four years later that there appeared Landor's next, and last, volume, the *Heroic Idyls*. In the interval he had contributed two or three prose dialogues to the *Athenæum*. The *Heroic Idyls* is a volume entirely of verse, about four parts English and one part Latin. Besides a number of personal and occasional pieces, some written recently, and many long ago, in Landor's usual vein between epigrammatic trifling and tender gravity, there are in this volume some half-a-dozen new dialogues or dramatic scenes in verse, of which *Theseus and Hippolyta*, and the *Trial of Æschylus*, are among Landor's very best work in this kind. Here, from the dialogue of the Amazonian Queen and her Athenian vanquisher, is an example of the poetry which the old man was still capable of writing at eighty-eight:—

Theseus. My country shall be thine, and there thy state
Regal.
Hippolyta. Am I a child? give me my own,
And keep for weaker heads thy diadems.
Thermodon I shall never see again,
Brightest of rivers, into whose clear depth
My mother plunged me from her warmer breast,
And taught me early to divide the waves
With arms each day more strong, and soon to chase
And overtake the father swan, nor heed
His hoarser voice or his uplifted wing.

Let us only add from the *Herioc Idyls* a few lines of its brief preface, turned with Landor's old incomparable air of temperate and dignified self-assurance,—

He who is within two paces of his ninetieth year may sit down and make no excuses; he must be unpopular, he never tried to be much otherwise; he never contended with a contemporary, but walked alone on the far eastern uplands, meditating and remembering.

The *Heroic Idyls* appeared in the autumn of 1863, with a dedication to Mr. Edward Twisleton, to whom Landor had a few months before entrusted the manuscript of the volume to be brought home. The society of this accomplished scholar and amiable gentleman was almost the last in which Landor was able to take pleasure. From the beginning of 1864 his infirmities of all kinds increased upon him. Even after the publication of the *Heroic Idyls*, he had sent home a new batch of five short dialogues in prose and verse. But the end was now fast approaching. In the mid-spring of his eighty-ninth year, 1864, he was still able to take a momentary pleasure and interest in the visit of the young English poet, Mr. Swinburne, already the most ardent of his admirers, and soon to become the most melodious of his panegyrists, who had made a pilgrimage to Florence on purpose to see the old man's face before he died. Except for such transitory awakenings, Landor had sunk by the summer of 1864 into almost complete unconsciousness of external things. He could still call his faculties about him for a few minutes, to write fragments of verse, or short notes to Mr. Browning or Mr. Forster, but these notes are often incoherent and interrupted. During these last months his two youngest sons came down from the villa, and tended with kindness the closing hours of their father. About the middle of September the throat trouble from which he had long suffered brought on a difficulty in swallowing. He refused to take nourishment, and sank, after three days' abstinence, in a fit of coughing, on the 17th September, 1864.

And so the indomitable spirit was spent at last, and the old lion was at rest.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

"I NEVER did a single wise thing in the whole course of my existence, although I have written many which have been thought such," reflects Landor, in one of the scrawled and fugitive confessions of his last years. Landor's power lay in truth not in doing, but in thinking and saying. His strength was not in the management of life, but in the creative and critical operations of the mind. Of all men who ever lived, none furnishes a more complete type of what Mr. Matthew Arnold, in speaking of Dante, calls "the born artist, the born solitary;" the man to be judged not by his acts but by his utterances. Or if we are to judge these unpractical spirits by their acts also, by their outward as well as by their inward manifestations, then the test which we apply must be the test not of success, but of intention. It is not in their nature to be successful; it was in Landor's nature least of all. Dashed by his volcanic temperament and his blinding imagination into collision with facts, he suffered shipwreck once and again. But if we apply to his character and career the measure not of results, but of intention, we shall acknowledge in Landor a model on the heroic scale of many noble and manly virtues. He had a heart infinitely kind

and tender. His generosity was royal, delicate, never hesitating. In his pride there was no moroseness, in his independence not a shadow of jealousy. From spite, meanness, or uncharitableness he was utterly exempt. He was loyal and devoted in friendship, and what is rare, at least as prone to idealize the virtues of his friends as the vices of his enemies. Quick as was his resentment of a slight, his fiercest indignations were never those which he conceived on personal grounds, but those with which he pursued an injustice or an act of cruelty, nor is there wanting an element of nobleness and chivalry in even the wildest of his breaches with social custom. He was no less a worshipper of true greatness than he was a despiser of false. He hated nothing but tyranny and fraud, and for those his hatred was implacable. His bearing under the consequences of his own impracticability was of an admirable courage and equanimity. True, he did not learn by experience; but then neither did he repine at misfortune. Another man conscious of his intentions, and reaping the reward he reaped, would have never ceased to complain. Landor wore a brave face always, and after a catastrophe counted up, not his losses, but his consolations, his "felicities," reckoning among them even that sure symptom of a wholesome nature, the constant pleasantness of his nightly dreams. There is a boyishness about his outbreaks from first to last. At the worst, he is like a kind of gigantic and Olympian schoolboy; a nature passionate, unteachable, but withal noble, courageous, loving-hearted, bountiful, wholesome and sterling to the heart's core.

But it is the work and not the life of a man like Landor which in reality most concerns us. In his work, then, as it seems to me, Landor is a great and central

artist in his mother tongue, and a great creative master of historic sentiment and of the human heart. He is at the same time a great critic—I use the word in its natural sense, the sense in which criticism is distinguished from creation—a great critic of life; a masterly, if occasionally capricious, critic of literature; a striking, if impulsive and impetuous, critic of history and government.

The causes of his scant popularity are not difficult to discern. His thoughts were not of a nature especially to stir his own or any one time. He was indeed the son of his age in his passion for liberty, and in his spirit of humanity and tenderness for the dumb creation; and his imaginative instinct and imaginative longings in the direction of ancient Hellas were shared by the general European culture of his time. But for the rest he ranged, apart from the passions or the tempests of the hour, among the heroic figures of the past and the permanent facts and experiences of life. He "walked along the far eastern uplands, meditating and remembering;" and to the far eastern uplands those who would walk with him must brace themselves to mount. Even then, there are difficulties arising from that want of consideration and sympathy in Landor for his readers of which I have spoken. He sometimes puzzles us for want of explanations, and often fatigues us with intrusive disquisitions. These, however, are the imperfections of a great master, and the way to counteract them is by providing the student with help where help is wanted; by selection above all, and in the next place by occasional comment or introduction. A selection or golden treasury of Landor's shorter dramatic dialogues, edited with such helps for the reader as I suggest, would be, as was said long ago by Julius Hare, "one of the most beautiful books in the

language, that is to say in the world." From the longer, the discursive dialogues, perhaps the only selection possible for popular use would be one on the principle adopted by Mr. Hilliard—a selection that is, of detached sentences and sayings. These form a kind of literature in which England since the seventeenth century has not been rich; and from the conversations and other prose writings of Landor there is to be gathered such an anthology of them as the literature of France itself could hardly surpass. If indeed there is any English writer who can be compared to Pascal for power and compression, for incisive strength and imaginative breadth together, in general reflections, and for the combination of conciseness with splendour in their utterance, it is certainly Landor. Space has failed me to illustrate or do more than name this province of his genius. The true Landorian, no doubt, will prefer to dig these jewels for himself from their surroundings—surroundings sometimes attractive and sometimes the reverse; but true Landorians may at present be counted on the fingers, and I speak of what has to be done in order to extend to wider circles the knowledge of so illustrious a master.

In calling him a great artist in English letters, I refer rather to his prose than to his verse. He was equally at home, as I began by saying, in both forms, but it is in prose only that he is at his best. He had himself no illusions upon this point, and consistently declared, at least after he had applied himself to the *Imaginary Conversations*, that poetry was his amusement, prose his proper study and business. Again: "the only thing which makes me imagine that I cannot be a very bad poet, is that I never supposed myself to be a very good one." That which essentially distinguishes

poetry from prose is the presence of two inseparable elements in just proportion, emotion, and the musical regulation and control of emotion. In the poetry of Landor, the element of control is apt to be in excess; his verses are apt to be sedate to the point of tameness. As a matter of critical preference, indeed, he preferred the poetry of sobriety and restraint to the poetry of vehemence and of enthusiasm. "What is there lovely in poetry unless there be moderation and composure?" Well and good; but observing moderation and composure, it is still possible to strike and to maintain the true poetical pitch and poetical ring. Landor strikes them often, but never, as it seems to me, maintains them long. Therefore his quite short pieces, whether gay or grave, pieces that express a fancy or an emotion with neatness and precision approaching the epigrammatic, and with musical cadences of extreme simplicity, are on the whole his best. His lighter autobiographical verses of all kinds, and including those written at greater length in blank verse or eight-syllable rhymes, contain much, as the reader will have perceived by such specimens as we have been able to give, that is in a high degree dignified, interesting, and graceful. In his loftier flights Landor is admirable and disappointing by turns. In high-pitched lyrical writing he will start often with a magnificent movement,—

> Not were that submarine
> Gem-lighted city mine,—

and fall within a few lines into a prosaic sedateness both of thought and sound. In high-pitched narrative or dramatic writing he is sometimes more sustained; but when, in verse, Landor becomes sustained, he is apt also to become monotonous.

But if Landor is a poet, so far as concerns the form of his verse, only of the second order, he is unquestionably a prose writer of the very first. "Good prose," he says, "to say nothing of the original thoughts it conveys, may be infinitely varied in modulation. It is only an extension of metres, an amplification of harmonies, of which even the best and most varied poetry admits but few." Landor had too rigid and mechanical a conception of the laws of verse; in the extended metres and amplified harmonies of prose he was an extraordinary and a noble master. There was not the simplest thing but received in his manner of saying it a charm of sound as well as a natural and grave distinction of air; there was not the most stupendous in the saying of which he ever allowed himself to lose moderation or control. His passion never hurries him, in prose, into the regular beats or equi-distant accents of verse; he accumulates clause upon clause of towering eloquence, but in the last clause never fails to plant his period composedly and gracefully on its feet. His perfect instinct for the rhythms and harmonies of prose reveals itself as fully in three lines as in a hundred. It is only a great master of prose who could have written this:—

A bell warbles the more mellifluously in the air when the sound of the stroke is over, and when another swims out from underneath it, and pants upon the element that gave it birth.

Or this:

There are no fields of amaranth on this side of the grave: there are no voices, O Rhodopè, that are not soon mute, however tuneful: there is no name, with whatever emphasis of passionate love repeated, of which the echo is not faint at last.

But harmony and rhythm are only the superficial beauties of a prose style. Style itself, in the full meaning of the word, depends upon something deeper and more inward. Style means the instinctive rule, the innate principle of selection and control, by which an artist shapes and regulates every expression of his mind. Landor was in English prose an artist comparable with the highest in their respective spheres; with Milton in English verse, or with Handel in music. He was as far as possible from seeking after or recommending any of the qualities generally denoted by fine writing. So far as he sought after or recommended anything, it was the study of simplicity, parsimony, and the severest accuracy in speech. "I hate false words, and seek with care, difficulty, and moroseness, those that fit the thing." If Landor is at times a magniloquent and even a pompous writer, the reason is that his large words befit the largeness of his thoughts and images, and pomp is the natural expression of his genius. The instinct of dignity, combined with the study of simplicity and directness; natural majesty, and the absence of artificial ornament; these are the first characteristics of Landor's prose. The next are the completeness and mutual independence of its separate clauses and periods. His sentences are apt to stand alone like his ideas, and to consist either of single clauses, each giving accurate expression to a single thought, or of carefully harmonized and adjusted groups of clauses giving expression to a group of closely connected and interdependent thoughts. The best skeleton type of a Landorian paragraph is that which we quoted some pages back on Lord Byron: "I had avoided him; I had slighted him; he knew it. He did not love me; he could not." No conjunctions, no transitions; each state-

ment made by itself, and their connexion left to be discerned by the reader. If we take the most sustained examples of Landor's eloquence, we shall find in them so many amplified and enriched examples of the same method. These qualities render his prose an unrivalled vehicle for the expression of the more stable, permanent, massive order of ideas and images. But for expressing ideas of sequence, whether the sequence of propositions in an argument, or the sequence of incidents in a narrative, Landor's style is less adapted. There is a natural analogy between various manners of writing and the other arts; and the ordinary criticism on Landor, that he seems to write in marble, is true enough. Solidity, beauty and subtlety of articulation, mass with grace, and strength with delicacy, these are the qualities which he obtains to perfection, but he obtains them at the price of a certain immobility. He was probably right in believing that he had imparted to his work yet another of the qualities of marble—its imperishableness.

THE END.

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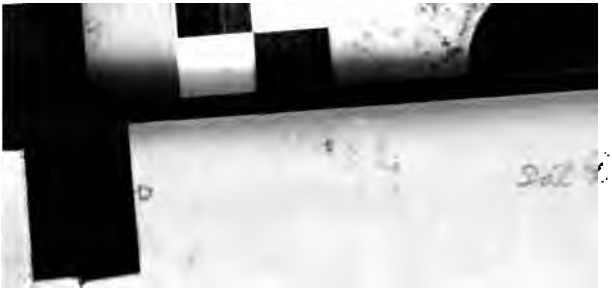

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